■ BUSINESS/B1
Heavy losses on Wall Street spark selling spree; RP stocks post biggest loss in 5 years

■ METRO/A25
E-payment for MRT, LRT trains eyed

■ NEWS/A24
Filipina convicted in S'pore of chop-chop slay of fellow OFW

■ WORLD/A29
US Senate backs citizenship for illegal immigrants with 2-year residency

Skeptical Emata pal now looking for 'lechon' money

By the PDI Mindanao, Visayas and Southern Luzon Bureaus

DAVAO CITY—A CLOSE FRIEND OF ERWIN "Pastor" Emata's yesterday said he would now have to find the wherewithal to produce a roast pig to celebrate the latter's successful climb of Mt. Everest.

Admitting that he had been skeptical that it was...

SKEPTICAL A11

e-mail feedback@inquirer.com.ph

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, May 19, 2006 ▲▲ 7 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 160 P18 website: www.inq7.net

No shame in being called GMA lapdog but ...

By Philip C. Tubeza

DAVAO DEL SUR REP. Douglas Cagas says he feels no shame about being called a lapdog of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

But he says he also would not hesitate to join...

NO SHAME A11

Second Filipino conquers Everest

Garduce expected to reach summit tomorrow

By Alcuin Papa

BARELY 24 HOURS AFTER LEO ORACION announced that "the Philippine eagle has landed" on the summit of Mt. Everest, a second Filipino made quick work of the ascent.

Erwin "Pastor" Emata, a native of Davao, left Everest's Camp 4 (8,000 meters or 26,000 feet) on Wednesday at 9:35 p.m. Nepal time (11:05 p.m. in Manila) and made it to the peak of the world's highest mountain in just seven hours and 49 minutes with the aid of oxygen.

He made it yesterday at 5:24 a.m. Nepal time (7:24 a.m. in Manila), or four hours ahead of schedule.

Both Oracion and Emata are members of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition (FPMEE). From Camp 4, Oracion reached the peak in 15 hours.

Pemba Dorje Sherpa of Nepal set the record for the fastest ascent from Everest's Base Camp to the summit at eight hours and 10 minutes on May 21, 2004.

Oracion and Emata, both 32, are now at Camp 2 (6,400 meters or 21,000 feet) where the FPMEE had stocked food and equipment. At noon today they are expected to reach Base Camp (5,400 meters or 17,700 feet) and to partake of a special meal prepared by other FPMEE members.

Upon reaching the summit, Emata immediately radioed FPMEE expedition leader Arturo Valdez at Base Camp.

His first words were "It's so cold here," Valdez reported to a radio interview.

Emata, who was among 60 other climbers mostly from Spain, was the first in the group to make it to the top.

"Pastor's time is really above average," Butch Sebastian, cofounder of the FPMEE expedition, told the Inquirer.

"He is really a strong climber," Sebastian said, adding:

"Our preparations and training really helped. He had an early start, so he was able to get ahead of his group. Also, he is in great condition, and he had a lot of determination."

Sebastian also noted that unlike Oracion who had to deal with...

SECOND A11

THAT TOWERING FEELING: Erwin "Pastor" (the nickname for praying every step of the way) Emata summits the world's highest mountain at 5:24 a.m. Nepal time (7:24 a.m. Philippine time) on May 18. And so it has come to pass the past week that the Filipinos ever in urgent search of heroes have found new exciting role models in mountaineers Leo Oracion and Emata.

City of Manila bans 'Da Vinci Code'

By Tina G. Santos

MOVIEGOERS IN MANILA MAY have to go to neighboring cities to watch "The Da Vinci Code" after the city council yesterday passed a resolution prohibiting the showing of the controversial movie.

The resolution said the movie, which was based on US author Dan Brown's explosive novel, "is undoubtedly offensive and contrary to established religious beliefs which cannot take precedence over the right of the persons involved in the film to freedom of expression."

The resolution, which was passed just hours before cinemas in Manila and other parts of the metropolis began showing the movie, cited a provision in the Revised Penal Code that made it "a crime to exhibit films which offend a religion."

Councilor Bolando Valeriano, one of the authors of the resolution, said the ban would take effect today after theater owners in Manila shall have been furnished copies of the measure.

The film's premiere that Jesus...

CITY OF MANILA A20

MEGA BILLBOARD of the most controversial film in recent memory appears to be roaring along with a bus on Edsa, and may be on its road to perdition as it opens across Asia on Thursday in lamentations and the gnashing of teeth.

Third Filipino climber on track for 1-2-3 finish

By Luigi A. del Puerto and Tony S. Bergonia

ROMI GARDUCE REACHED Camp 4 on Mt. Everest yesterday afternoon and will push on to record the summit at 8 p.m., Nepal time, according to his local contacts.

"Romi reached Camp 4 at 1:55 p.m. Nepal time (2:55 p.m. in Manila)," said Hamir Ortega, head of GMA 7's News and Public Affairs and Corporate Publicity. "He says the wind is getting stronger, compared to the last two days."

Ortega dismissed a report that Garduce had been struck with fever, which was why he was lagging behind fellow mountaineers Leo Oracion and Erwin "Pastor" Emata.

"I don't think that's true," Ortega said. "Romi is OK. He went out: assault starts tonight at 8...

THIRD A11

'A thriller, not a historical document'

By Paul Daza

AT A PACKED SCREENING YESterday of "The Da Vinci Code" in Cubao, Quezon City, there was an audible gasp from the audience during one scene. This was when Holy Grail expert Leigh Teabing, played by actor Ian McKellen, stated that Mary Magdalene was pregnant with Jesus Christ's child as He was being crucified. Teabing added that the Catholic Church had been covering this up for years because if word got out, people would see Jesus Christ as a mere man and Christianity would collapse.

REVIEW

Is all the fuss over the movie version of Dan Brown's controversial book warranted?

"The Da Vinci Code" stars Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, a Harvard symbologist who gets drawn into a search for the Holy Grail when he's implicated in a murder at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Accompanied by Sophie Neveu (Audrey...

DAVINCI A22

Time mag writer placed on watch list

By Armand N. Nocum

THE GOVERNMENT HAS PLACED a Filipino journalist working for Time magazine on its watch list as it deepens its crackdown on politicians and businessmen behind the alleged Feb. 24 coup attempt against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday said he had ordered the Bureau of Immigration to put Time's Philippine correspondent Nelly Sindayen on the list to compel her to shed light on the alleged plot.

Sindayen earlier coauthored an article in the international...

TIME A11

POETRY RECOLLECTED is the tranquility of the yellow-green expanse of a ricefield framed by a mountain forest in Klarobo town, Sarangani province.

OPUS DEI IN RP

'Secular mentality but following Church agenda'

By Ma. Corne P. Dopo

(Conclusion)

A SECULAR MENTALITY: THIS IS what an Opus Dei member should have when doing God's work, Jesus Estanislao, a noted economist and Opus Dei numerary, stresses again and again. It is a Christian spirituality for ordinary people aiming for personal sanctification.

SPECIAL REPORT

"We do not use our affiliation with Opus Dei and come out as one or as an issue," he says.

Members do not necessarily share the same views, Estanislao says. They are mostly stand-alone decision-makers, each one acting according to his or her own lights. Prayer, study, reflection and the teachings of the church help them navigate through the secular.

A former finance secretary, Estanislao chairs the Institute of Corporate Directors. He is also the president and CEO of the Institute for Solidarity in Asia. This is one way of pursuing the Opus Dei calling and "the agenda of the church" in the world.

"Where the church pushes the cart," Estanislao says, "we push our cart in that same direction."

Today there are approximately 3,000 Opus Dei members in the Philippines, both male (70 priests among them) and female.

SECULAR A19

A1
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Second FRONTPAGE
FRIDAY, MAY 19, 2006

Palace, Senate trade barbs on Cha-cha

By Jil C. Calasanguan Jr., Jaime Laboy-Javellana and Jerome Aning

MALACAÑANG IS PEEVED that the Senate has shut the door on a proposal to turn Congress into a Constituent Assembly to amend the Constitution just one day after it agreed to sit down with members of the House of Representatives to find ways out of the impasse on Charter change.

"It's a serious and basic procedural issue that the Senate and House panels should perhaps have discussed first before one of them made an inappropriate and took a stand on. That's what the agreement... was all about," said Gabriel Claudio, the President's executive assistant.

Senate President Franklin Drilon's quick retort was that the Palace should leave the Senate and House alone.

"Amending the Constitution is basically a legislative function," Drilon said. "Malacañang cannot appoint or name a constituent which will propose amendments to the Constitution."

He added: "Malacañang should not interfere because this is a legislative matter which, under the Constitution, is left to the Congress. Any doubt on the legality of the process we're suggesting will ultimately be settled in the Supreme Court, not by Malacañang."

Claudio said that during the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) meeting at the Palace last Tuesday, the senators agreed that they would discuss this contentious issue with their counterparts in the House before tackling the more difficult ones.

On Wednesday, the Senate committee on constitutional amendments chaired by Sen. Richard Gordon declared that changing the Charter through a Constituent Assembly as opposed by the House was not among the options allowed by the Constitution.

"The agreement in Ledac was to save first for other substantive issues about the proposed amendments they can see eye-to-eye on, for example, making the Commission's economic provisions more conducive to investments growth before tackling the sensitive issue of how to amend or revise the Charter," said Claudio.

"Signing the Gordon and Rep. Gonzalez-Teves Jr. committees in dialog and bridge existing chasms should have been the first move. I hope the two panels can still resume to gather with open minds," Claudio said. While the Gordon doctrine may be legally feasible, the question is whether it will open the Senate's doors to constitutional change and reform or keep them locked."

The Senate has long questioned the House's contention that the Constitution can be changed through a constituent assembly where both chambers vote as one. Senate leadership is still hoping Congress will convene as a Constituent Assembly, the President has endorsed a parallel move to change the Constitution through a people's initiative.

Gordon is set to present the Senate's position on Jarnda, this commentary in the House, in their first dialogue next Tuesday (See related story on this page).

Meanwhile, opponents of Charter change staged a "dancing protest" outside the Commission on Elections' central office in Manila yesterday of reasons to denounce the administration's moves to amend Constitution.

The Black and White Movement led a group of 50 women in dancing the tango at the Comelec gates to homosexual. The group is part of the larger **STOP Charter tradition** launched last month.

The protesters, led by former Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman and Teresita Ochoa, also a former presidential adviser, danced the tango with the help of real-life dance instructors to show them the difficult task. Then chanted "Don Gloria" in they danced.

PHILIP JO & Bayan

'Massage' diplomacy: House softens position on Con-Ass

By Michael Lim Ubac and Juliet Labog-Javellana

EMPLOYING WHAT THEY TERMED "MASsage diplomacy," Charter change advocates in the House of Representatives led by Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. said yesterday their agreed with the Senate that proposed constitutional amendments could be drafted by both chambers in the same way that they draft new laws.

Jarnda told the Inquirer that the House would bend "backwards, forward, sideways" just to accomplish its goal of abolishing the two-chamber Congress and replacing it with a unicameral parliament.

Jarnda is Speaker Jose de Venecia's protegee in the Charter change initiative as chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments.

"We're trying to massage relations with the senators," said Jarnda, when asked why he was not refuting his counterparts in the Senate, who have rejected the House's demand to turn Congress into a Constituent Assembly with both chambers voting as one.

After agreeing to a dialogue with the House, the Sen. Richard Gordon's committee on constitutional amendments held a recess last Wednesday and took the position that the 1987 Constitution does not provide for a constituent assembly as a basis for charter amendments.

"The consensus over there is no need for a constituent assembly because the Constitution is very clear that any senator or congressman can propose to amend the Constitution or even revise the Constitution by mere resolution, in which case it is treated as a constituent power of legislation which can be referred to the standing committee of each house," Gordon said at a news conference.

"And when it's approved by three-fourths vote, it becomes a proposed amendment to the Constitution which then is submitted to a plebiscite," Gordon added.

Gordon said the constituent assembly as a mode for amending the Charter was provided for in the 1935 Constitution but not by the current Charter. The other modes for amending or revising the charter are constitutional convention and people's initiative.

The Senate's legal committee's position was in line with De Venecia's call last Tuesday at a meeting in Hohenberg in "various official diplomatic relations" with the Arroyo administration.

Asked about Gordon's statement that amendments could be proposed by simple congressional resolutions, Jarnda replied, "That can be done. We have flexibility. Precisely, we're dealing with another chamber, so we have to move backwards, forward, sideways."

He said he also agreed with Gordon that the Constitution does not provide for a Constituent Assembly "Yes, that's true. It's a term attached to a legislative body that is addressing constitutional matters in deliberation from ordinary legislation."

However, he said he would still appeal to the senators to reassess or consider a constituent assembly to speed things up.

"We have no issue..." he said. "Jarnda is not arguing against them but we have to be practical in the light of what the House perceives to be an imperative change."

Jarnda pointed to the "difference of perception and attitude" as the greatest stumbling block in Cha-cha. "They don't feel it's urgent. We do," he said.

He said his committee would "discuss, analyze and approve proposed amendments" which would then be presented to senators during the joint caucus.

"When we sit down, then they will ask us what we want. This is what we want changes in the political and economic aspects, including the shift to a federal form of government. Then they will ask us if the timetable we will take."

During his news conference, Gordon produced a copy of the House rules which states, "The adoption of resolutions proposing amendments to or revision of the Constitution shall follow the procedure for the adoption of bills."

"We're merely saying to the House: 'It's in your rules,'" Gordon said.

Gordon said any congressman or senator can file a resolution proposing an amendment to the charter and they will go through the normal course of legislation.

Under the recess, a bill filed in the House or Senate is referred to the chamber's appropriate committee before adoption by the entire chamber. Once approved, the bill is sent to the other chamber.

If there are conflicting provisions, the House and the House convene a bicameral conference committee which reconciles the differences.

"If we cannot agree, the amendment is lost," Gordon said.

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Equatorial Guinea president due

By Voltaire Cruz and Christine O. Avendaño

THE PRESIDENT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA is arriving today for a four-day state visit, with possible oil deals with the Philippines on top of the agenda, the Department of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday.

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo is scheduled to meet with congressional and business leaders. He will also visit tourist spots and agricultural and fishery projects in Bataan, Cebu and Boracay.

The President's Official Gazette said President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang at 3 this afternoon to discuss partnerships and joint ventures, especially in oil exploration, extraction and processing.

A Palace statement said President Arroyo and President Obiang are expected to hold bilateral talks and witness the signing of several agreements.

The Central African nation is one of the

[illegible] oil in reserve and hosts some 2,500 overseas Filipino workers, the DFA said.

Obiang is expected to land at Villamor Air Base at noon today. His delegation will include his wife, Constancia Mangue de Obiang.

Tonight, a state dinner will be tendered in Malacañang by the visiting president and his party.

On Saturday, Mbasogo will lay a wreath at the Rizal Monument and visit the Asian Institute of Tourism in Diliman, Quezon City.

He will then fly to Bacolod City to visit the agricultural estate of businessman Eduardo "Tawdoy" Cojuangco.

He will be in Pangasinan on Sunday to tour the various aquaculture projects there.

On Monday, Mbasogo will visit the Philippine Veterans Technical Schools Inc. in Alabang and the Philippine National Oil Co. in Tagaig City before emplaning for his country.

Pacific plan holders post bail

By Tarra V. Quismundo

NEARLY A DOZEN HOLDERS OF EDSA-ction plans purchased from the pre-need firm Pacific Plans Inc. posted a total of P230,000 in bail in a Makati court yesterday pending trial on illicit charges brought on by a company that said it had grown weary of the alleged bad accounting by loan customers processing its inability or inter-obligations under the plans.

Eleven officers of the Pacific Building Investors Coalition (PBIC) Coalition shelled out P20,000 each to stay out of jail after Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Bernato Quilala issued a warrant for their arrest on illicit charges filed by the Pachanges Group of Companies Inc.-Securities Pacific Holdings on the group.

PBIC is an organization of plan holders pursuing claims from the troubled PPI, which is working on a rehabilitation plan recently approved by another Makati court.

The plan holders who posted bail were Philip Pecate, Mr. Anabella Santos, John Joseph Gaviola Jr., Jose Alcala, Rolando Pareja, Rosalina Bendicio, Cornelio Dalby, Victoria Delatorre, Victor Ernest Jacinto, Jovencio Peroche and Elvira Cruz.

Lawyer Jesse John P. Guevara, president of one of the Pachanges companies who filed the libel suit, welcomed the Makati prosecutor's decision to bring the complaints to court for trial.

"The case should then go to normal judicial course and allow the court to decide whether our directors are guilty or not. Stage-managed dramatics is not a defense," he said in a statement.

"We hope our pains since April last year against the vicious and slanderous attacks on us try for plan holders to understand the situation that the company is in and to give it time for rehabilitation."

RP seaman in Queen Mary 2 killing of fellow Pinoy now in police custody

THE OFFICERS OF LUXURY LINer Queen Mary 2 have turned over to British police the Filipino crewman accused of killing a crewmember while the ship was still in the high seas on May 12, the Department of Foreign Affairs reported yesterday.

Rodolfo Izunque, 49, was held at the Lymington police station in Hampshire shortly after the QM2 docked at her home port in Southampton, England, on May 17, the DFA said.

DFA spokesman Bert Anupat said the body of the victim, crewman Joel Tignan, was still being kept in a hospital morgue in the coastal town of Groningen, the Netherlands.

Tignan died of violent head injuries while being airlifted to shore for treatment, following a "fight" with Izunque, according to earlier reports from the Philippine Embassy in London.

The fight took place below deck in the ship's rest and recreation area, and was reportedly witnessed by other Filipino and foreign crew members.

CALL THE INQUIRER SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINE 896-6000

Budget surplus to help ease oil crunch

By Christine O. Avendaño

ILAGED OVER THE P17.6-BILLION budget surplus, President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday some of the money would go toward cushioning alternative fuels to ease the burden of high oil prices.

The President said more jatropha trees, tubular weeds are a source of biodiesel, would be planted and more fueled by plant oils would be produced on commercial scale.

The President presided over a demonstration of how effective jatropha, also known as tuba and catanduanes, was as a substitute for diesel and on the use of plant oils as an alternative to the more expensive liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

"We want to use the money to make life better for those suffering from the high oil prices," the President said in Malacañang.

In a statement she read, Ms Arroyo also thanked the government bureaucracy for "keeping spending down and public service efficiency up at a time when the people are cautiously carrying the burden of tough (but) reforms besides the run-up of world oil prices."

The government gained a P17.6-billion budget surplus in April, five times higher than the surplus it posted a year earlier.

Ms Arroyo said the government had initially allowed P686 million for the planting of jatropha in military camps and for research on its "highest yielding species."

As for the plant oil stove, the President said she would support its "mass production and distribute some samples to 10 hot-spot urban poor communities."

Jun Lozada, president of Philippine Forest Corp., told the President jatropha increase had been put up in ordinary bases like Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija and Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon.

At present, the government has 200,000 hectares planted to jatropha, while the private sector has three times the land planted to the tree, Lozada said.

Actually, the government was still testing jatropha, according to National Economic Developing Authority (Neda) chair Romulo Neri, who added that he did not want to encourage the private sector to come in at this time and the government had documented the results of its experience in the military camps.

"I just want to make sure it's commercializing on a bigger scale," Neri said, noting that the area "will tell us how viable it is on a commercial scale."

For today, the country's oil import bill stood at $7 billion and 20 or 25 percent of this can be cleared, Neri said.

The plant oil stove, meanwhile, currently costs P2,200 but Neri said its inventors, a team from the Leyte State University, were studying how to bring down its cost.

Neri said the stove was economical because it used vegetable, coconut and regular cooking oil.

In yesterday's demonstration by Dr. Rafael Guzmán, dean of the UP College of Engineering and Agri-Industries, the stove was made to run on coconut oil.

Guzmán said the stove could operate for 10-12 hours using only three liters of oil. He said they had tested jatropha oil on the stove and it worked as well.

The stove is currently available in Leyte but will be mass-produced by next year, Guzmán said.

PRESIDENT Arroyo and Meralco chair Ramon Ang watch the plant oil stove in operation.

STUDENT ENTREPRENEUR FROM ESA IS HOT, NEW FASHION RETAILER.

Entrepreneurs School of Asia (ESA) students have successful businesses before graduating college.

As a child, Marial Rivera, was always fascinated with fashion but for most of her life it was just an interest. Last month, however, Marial entered the fashion industry and had a soft launch of her own collection. Athiti, government ex-Kagalit at National Department Executive Service, the brand's target markets are female teens and young females. In one month, ANGL has become part of the top 10 brands being sold by this store. And the department store has already asked her to begin supplying to their other branches. Marial's design philosophy is to design clothes she herself would like to wear: trendy, hip and designer - but at prices less than what designer brands charge.

As a B.S. Entrepreneurship student in the Entrepreneurs School of Asia (ESA), Marial not only acquired the business tools and knowledge but more importantly realized the passion and inspiration to start a business. Armed with the entrepreneurial skills and mindset from ESA she is more confident every step to her journey being a Philippine fashion.

"I didn't really think I could have my own apparel business, and start succeeding, even before I graduated from college." **Marial Rivera, Student Entrepreneur**

Taking on the responsibility of setting up and managing their own business at such an early age makes ESA students more mature, decisive and confident. This group has a clear advantage over their peers. Marial Rivera is one of the 10 new student entrepreneur graduates of ESA for 2006.

Marial Rivera's products on display at Robinsons Department Store

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CHINA CAMPUS

The ESA opened its China campus last may 2006 in partnership with the Zhejiang Government in China, located in Hangzhou City, the known capital of China. ESA will offer programs not only for college students but for entrepreneurs and executives as well.

Flexible Programs
ESA Students have the option to do 1 or 2 terms in the China campus for using or learning how to do Business in China and Business Mandarin.

The Entrepreneurs School of Asia is located at No. 27 Calle Industria, Libis, Quezon City with telephone numbers 638-1188 or 634-1186. For more information, visit the website at www.entrepreneur.edu.ph.

ESA
ENTREPRENEURS SCHOOL of ASIA

Labor chief clarifies ban on tourist workers to UAE

By Jovanie Aning

LABOR SECRETARY PATRICIA STO. TOMAS yesterday clarified that the government was not considering implementing a total or a partial ban on the deployment of documented overseas Filipino workers to the United Arab Emirates.

"What we are against, consistently, is illegal recruitment that have would-be OFWs to enter the host country as undocumented migrants without proper protection, which makes them vulnerable and prone to human trafficking, exploitation and abuse," she said.

The labor department earlier warned Filipinos going to the UAE with visit visas from seeking employment in the territory without proper documentation and permits.

Despite abusive stories so-called Filipino "tourist workers" being underpaid and abused by unscrupulous employers.

Sto. Tomas said that the DOLE was set to implement a law which sought to curb the trafficking of persons and children for profit.

Sto. Tomas said the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in UAE's capital Abu Dhabi reported that a draft of the law had been referred to the concerned cabinet ministers for revision and approval.

She said that the law represented a milestone in the efforts to combat human trafficking and said its implementation would support steps being taken by the Philippines to check individuals and organizations who illegally recruit OFWs in the Middle East, using the Emirates as transit point.

Sto. Tomas said children, women, unskilled workers and jobseekers posing as tourists or tourist were the most vulnerable targets for trafficking rings. She said that human trafficking and people smuggling had been raking in huge profits.

The UAE remains the third-favored destination of documented OFWs, next to the land-based Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong.

The number of documented OFWs that have been deployed in the UAE, considered as the Hong Kong of the Middle East, reached 81,787 in 2005, representing a growth of 19.48 percent from the 68,386 OFWs in the Emirates in 2004.

The DOLE has called attention to a report of the United Nations' Office on Drug and Crime which said that human trafficking, wherein people are abducted or recruited across countries for forced labor, prostitution, and other manipulative activities, had become a global phenomenon.

UNODC defines trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of threat, coercion, abduction, and fraud or deception for sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or servitude, and the removal of organs.

It also involves the giving or receiving of payments to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person.

Corrections

IN THE MAY 3 ISSUE, a story on Page A12—"Pinoy-Swiss stilts down to dust's at Sixty"—erroneously reported the nationality and country of residence of the man who stepped down to his underpants at the Ninoy Aquino International airport. The man, Silvio Bongo, is an Italian-Swiss—not Filipino-Swiss. He lives in Goteborg, Sweden—not Switzerland.

* * *

IN THE MAY 16 ISSUE, a front-page article—"Childless couples to use Obando fertility rites today"—misstated that the Obando fertility rite had been scheduled to start on that day. The Obando festivity rites are held every year from May 17 to 19.

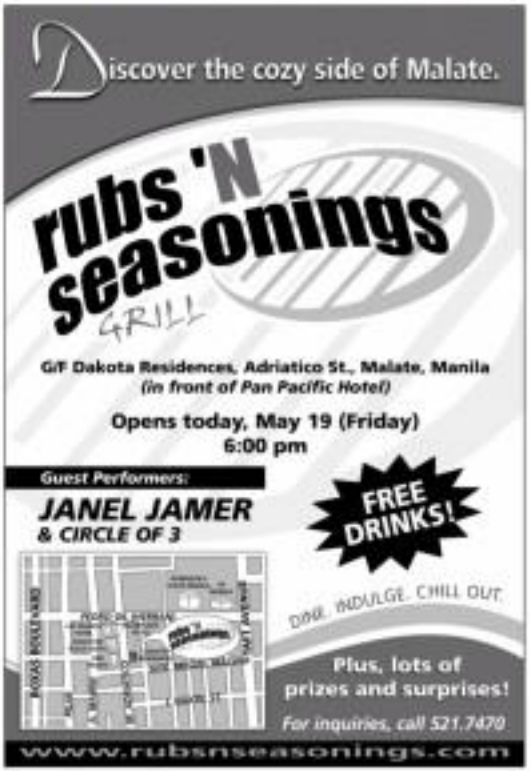
* * *

Readers may send their requests for corrections, clarifications or replies to the Inquirer, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 7/F Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Amorsolo Street, Makati City, fax this 897-8703 or 897-8710, e-mail corrections@inquirer.com.ph.

Complainants whose lack of fairness or objectivity may be cited in Letters Editor (Tel./mail and fax numbers, e-mail addresses, addresses, corrections@inquirer.com.ph or fax this 897-8710. Also, readers addressing the phone number is 897-8000 local 342.

PI77777A!

Morales sworn in as customs chief, finally



By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO YESTERDAY swore into office Napoleon Morales as permanent customs commissioner apparently as a reward for boosting the agency's collections in the last five months while in an acting capacity.

President Arroyo was impressed by the BOC's performance in the first four months of the year where it exceeded its goal by P13.858 billion and is on track of hitting its 2006 goal of P357 billion.

"I'm glad that you have met your target, congratulations, all the best," the President said during the ceremony.

Morales, who has been with the bureau for 38 years, starting as a messenger, was appointed acting customs commissioner in December last year largely on his working record at the Batangas port in place of Alexander Arevalo.

Morales is the first official customs commissioner since Alberto Lina resigned from office in July to join the Ryan 18 which sought for the President's resignation.

Disappointed

The President, however, was disappointed with the performance of the Bureau of Internal Revenue in the first four months that she personally called Revenue Commissioner Jose Wenceslao Maruja ordering him to cut short his trip in Germany and come back immediately to explain his agency's woeful collections.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves has blamed the low remittances from the large taxpayers' unit (made up of the top 1,000 corporations) as more companies used tax credits to offset their tax liabilities this year.

Teves has ordered the BIR to verify whether the tax credits used were genuine and to make an inventory of all tax credits still in the market.

Presidential chief of staff Michael Defensor said that BOC personnel were set to enjoy a bonanza by yearend because of their strong collections. "I think it is time as the BOC would get as much as P63,000 bonus if they continue their good job up to the end of the year," Defensor said.

In contrast, Defensor said the BIR lost a golden chance to get a windfall from their improved collection efforts this year when the agency incurred a P18 billion collection shortfall to April largely due to a steep drop in tax payments of top 1,000 corporations.

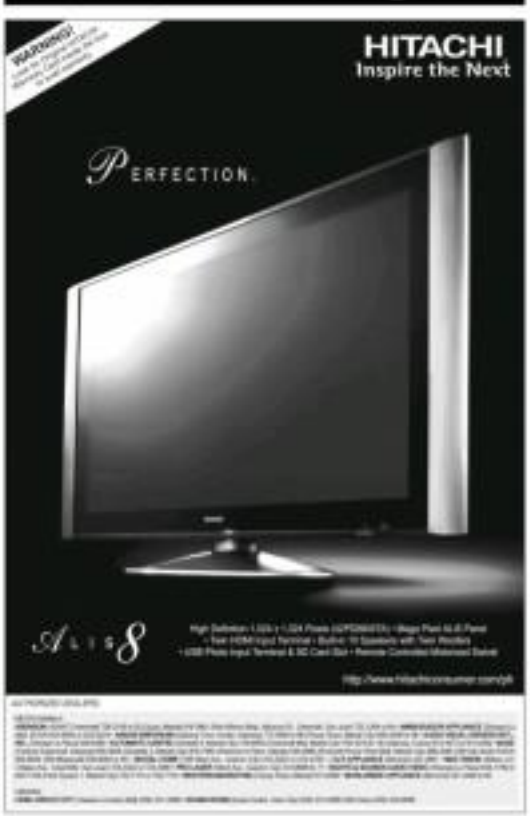
Poor performance

"It's really a pity because all of the BIR's regional district offices surpassed their collection targets. Only the Large Taxpayers Unit did (fail) it because of its poor performance," said Defensor.

The President created a rewards and incentive fund and revenue performance evaluation board under Republic Act No. 9335 aimed at spurring the BIR and BOC to boost their collections.

If the BIR and BOC surpass their target by up to 20 percent, 15 percent of the excess collection would be translated into a fund to be divided among members at the end of the year.

The regional district offices that surpass their targets can still get incentives (10 percent of their excess collection) if the BIR and BOC's total collections do not fall more than 10percent of the target. The incentive specifies that the evaluation board can sack BIR and BOC officials for failure to meet targets.



Domantay, 57

RODOLFO DMZ. DOmantay died on May 13 at 10:16 am at the Manila Doctors Hospital. He was 57.

His remains lie at Angel Chapel. Dulce Memorial Homes on Aliwl Subdivision, Sucat, Parañaque. Interment will be on Sunday at the Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina.

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REUTER

WEDGE IN RP-US TIES?

Subic rape case worries priest

By Nikko Dizon

A PROMINENT AMERICAN PRIEST who has served in the Philippines most of his life has expressed concern the recent sensitive public rape case has been featured more in divisive banner newspaper headlines.

Fr. James Reuter, S.J., told Dr. Jacinto in a recent interview that rape has and the four accused (US Marines) left aboard the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier bound for Singapore.

Reuter, who turns 78 on May 21, is the spiritual adviser of the Mother. He is practically considered to be a Filipino having been conferred honorary citizenship in recognition of his long years of service to Philippine education, among other things.

"They feel the judgment is not against them or much. It's against the whole United States," Reuter said, referring to Staff Sgt. Chad Carpenter and Lance Corporals Daniel Smith, Dominic Duplessis and Keith Silkwood who stand accused of raping a 22-year-old Filipina woman in the Subic freeport in November last year.

The bronze spoke with Reuter on May 9 before he left for the new papal nuncio, Archbishop Fernando Filoni, to arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

"Their statements are because they (the media and militant groups) are making it into an international issue," said Reuter, who is also the executive secretary of the local Catholic Church's National Office of Mass Media.

Reuter said the local media had been particularly "anti-American" in its reportage about the rape case.

"They (the accused) feel that everything is being said in their defense, and that all of the media is anti-American. Not against those four but against the USA of course," Reuter said.

The peaceful protest by the militant groups, he added, also said it all.

From "Bal Sin Bahayo" and "Stress with the VFA (Visiting Forces Agreement)" to "Tail the rapists," the protestors had passed judgment on the US and the four accused even before the trial had officially begun, Reuter said.

He said the four Marines remained "stressed, strained and depressed" over their situation.

"They are tired of being in jail. They'd like to get out," Reuter said.

He said Carpenter, who participated in exercises to see his wife and two young children in Okinawa, Japan, where the Marines are based.

Reuter said he continued to get wide spiritual and moral support in the local area.

From the airport, he said he was going to the US Embassy to say Mass for Duplessis and Carpenter, who were both Catholic.

Aside from saying Mass, Reuter has also been coordinating classes for the four accused subjects, like literature and ethics.

'Juday' gains reprieve in tax case arraignment

By Cynthia D. Balana

SANTOS

THE ARRAIGNMENT YESTERDAY OF MOVIE actress Judy Ann Santos on tax evasion charges was cancelled by the Court of Tax Appeals after she failed to show up, claiming lack of sufficient notice from the court.

CTA Presiding Justice Ernesto Acosta granted the request of Santos' lawyer, Anthony Abrenica, after the latter informed the court he subsequently received the notice the day before the scheduled arraignment, short of the required three-day notice.

As such, Abrenica said, he was not able to relay the notice either to the client, who was taping a television series, or to his manager Abbe Jarantilla.

Abrenica also told the CTA he was filing a motion seeking a review of the case in the Court of Appeals in order to block the arraignment which was reset to May 23.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue had filed the case against Santos and the DOJ upheld the BIR's findings that Santos had incurred an income tax deficiency of P8.714 million in 2003.

On Jan. 13, 2006, Santos filed a motion to quash the case but this was dismissed by the CTA which found reasonable grounds to believe tax evasion has been committed.

Santos then filed a motion to reconsider her motion to quash but, again, this was rejected by the CTA.

The DOJ said it found no merit for a reinvestigation of the case and directed the investigators to send the notice had failed to declare her substantial income from the taping of ABS-CBN television network's "Via Dolorosa" and Sin Cinema in 2002.

According to the DOJ resolution dated Oct. 1, 2005, Santos had "willfully, unlawfully and knowingly" filed a false and fraudulent tax return for 2002 where she indicated a gross income of P6.000 million when her correct income was P16.500 million, a deficiency of P6.360 million.

But Abrenica said the prosecutors may reason out since BIR records would show that there was no notice of his assessment and demand for payment sent to the client.

"I have risen to investigation, to assessment and so demand for payment of tax deficiency, how could they have signed the notice," Abrenica told reporters.

Abrenica said the BIR was only engaged in a "fishing expedition" when it said it was still investigating Santos's case and that any new evidence against her would be filed in court.

"In that law is fishing expedition? Huhuhin kita para imbestigahan pa kita (I'll see you but I'll have to investigate you first)?" he said.

Vice gov says bishop in mining probe biased

THE VICE GOVERNOR OF ALBAY TODAY today said the Catholic bishop heading the Rapu-Rapu Fact Finding Commission was a biased mining advocate as such was not qualified to head the body.

Vice Governor Antonio Calleja said in a press statement yesterday that he had the "smoking gun" showing that Bishop Arturo Bastes, who was appointed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to look into the Lafayette mining case in Sorsogon, was openly antimining and violated his own rules against conflict of interest.

Lafayette, which operates the copper and gold mine in Rapu-Rapu island, located off the eastern coast of Albay province, has been accused of spilling contaminated mining wastes into the region's waters. Lafayette has asked the government to allow test runs on its operations, but has removed Secretary Angelo Reyes and he will not allow test runs until after the commission has submitted its findings.

"I have the video of Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon handcuffing mining in general and accusing Lafayette of contaminating Sorsogon's lakes and waters without any scientific basis just several days before the President formed the Rapu Rapu Fact Finding Commission where he is the chair," Calleja said.

Another Calleja said, the bishop himself said the members of the commission, under the rules he himself drafted, should demonstrate objectivity, neutrality and impartiality and should not have previously expressed any opinion for or against the Lafayette issue.

Conflict of interest

"Well, Bishop Bastes a vocal, antimining advocate, he is now in a conflict of interest of his own making. How can we trust him if he has his own rules? How can we trust that the commission is impartial? With all due respect to the bishop, he is biased and he should have not been part of the commission from Day One," he said.

Calleja said a video is taken on Feb. 17, Bastes went to the island of Rapu Rapu to warn the crowd about mining and Lafayette.

He quoted the bishop as saying: "...The seas of Sorsogon are dead because of mining, the effects of Lafayette mining. The fish are no longer edible... I can no longer eat tanigue and mahimpo and all the different kinds of fish because of what happened here in Rapu Rapu."

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PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1,504 cases vs minors to be voided by new law

By Cynthia D. Rabasa

A TOTAL OF 1,504 CRIMINAL CASES involving young offenders will soon be dismissed by courts nationwide as a result of the new law, Republic Act No. 9344, which exempts those 15 years and below from any criminal liability.

Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral said this yesterday in a press conference, saying she expected the dismissal of the cases to happen in the next few weeks.

RA 9344, or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, provides that youth offenders aged 15 years and one day to 18 years old can only be criminally charged if they acted out the crime with discernment.

It also outlines the immediate turnover of children in conflict with the law to social workers upon apprehension. The law, which has a retroactive provision, will formally come into effect on May 22, 2006.

"The presumption is that those aged 15 years and below acted without discernment. Those whose cases will be dismissed will be placed under the DSWD facility for rehabilitation until they are ready for turnover to their parents," Cabral said.

She said the bulk of the cases to be dismissed came from Region 9 with 335, followed by Region 7 with 294, and the National Capital Region with 293.

The rest are from Region 11, 162; Region 10, 161; Region 1, 97; Region 8, 77; Region 2, 46; Region 4-B, Caraga, 23; Region 6, 20; and the Cordillera Autonomous Region, 3.

Cabral said the crimes committed were mostly petty ones, and that there was only one case of homicide.

Erap sues for libel

By Norman Bordadora

DEPOSED PRESIDENT JOSEPH ESTRADA will file multimillion-peso libel charges versus former beauty queen Joelle Pelaez for her claims in a statement orally that she divulged former leader used her bank accounts to launder P3.47 billion in ill-gotten funds.

Estrada spokesperson Hildegarde Dilangalen said in a news conference that Estrada has already instructed his lawyer Jose Sagalongos to draft the libel complaint against Pelaez and Manila Standard Today, the newspaper that published Pelaez's allegations.

"The story is meant to distract President Estrada who will again testify next week at the Sandiganbayan," Dilangalen said.

Dilangalen said the timing of Pelaez's allegations was suspect, coming at a time when Estrada is about to testify on allegations regarding his alleged ownership of the Jose Velarde bank account that first came to view during his impeachment trial.

"Why did it take her six years to come out? She should've shouted before. The things she said about happened long ago," Dilangalen said.

Dilangalen said Pelaez will face libel rap in the US.

He said lawyer Leonardo Quisumbing of the Siguion-Reyna, Montecillo and Ongsiako Law Office has already left for the US on Wednesday night to file the suit in behalf of Estrada.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, May 19, 2006
5th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 15:22-31
Gospel: John 15:12-17

Jesus said to his disciples, "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this, to give one's life for one's friends; and you are my friends if you do what I command you.

"I shall not call you servants any more, because servants do not know what their master is about. Instead I have called you friends, since I have made known to you everything I was told from my Father.

"You did not choose me; it was I who chose you, and I told you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. And everything you ask me in the name I use, he will give you.

"This is my command, that you love one another."

Commentary:

The Church gathered inside not a little declaring the absence of the Holy Spirit which is their decision as well, that they are not to lay added burdens on the non converts. It brought encouragement to the churches. Jesus' commandment demands everything: to love as God loves us, even to lay down our lives for one another as he did. Nothing else matters much in relation to this commandment, and all traditions, laws, customs, and rites must be evaluated in the light of the Spirit as that loving one another and all others is what we are known for nothing else.

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Palace appeals SC ruling on EO 464

By Armand N. Nocum

THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION IS asking the Supreme Court to reverse its ruling on Executive Order 464, arguing that the President did not act arbitrarily or abuse her authority in issuing the order barring members of the Cabinet and other officials from appearing in congressional hearings without her prior consent.

In 35-page motion for reconsideration filed Wednesday, Solicitor General Antonio Eduardo Nachura said "the President did not act so arbitrarily as to constitute abuse of discretion ... in requiring prior consent from executive officials before appearing in legislative investigations."

"It is respectfully prayed that the decision of this Court dated April 20, 2006 be reconsidered and set aside and another one be entered dismissing the petitions," Nachura said.

Nachura specifically asked the court to reverse its ruling that Sections 2 (b) and 3 of EO 464 were unconstitutional.

These portions of the order stated that the members of the Cabinet, officers of the Armed Forces and Philippine National Police, senior national security officials, among others, were "covered by executive privilege" and should secure the President's "prior consent" before appearing in any congressional inquiry.

The President issued the executive order in September 2005, at the height of congressional inquiries into the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal, the alleged diversion to the Arroyo's election campaign of the government's fertilizer fund, and the hiring of an American lobby group to push for amendments to the Philippine Constitution.

In asking the court to reverse its decision, Nachura said that the tribunal had "overlooked certain facts and circumstances, which justify the consent requirement for executive officials appearing in legislative investigations."

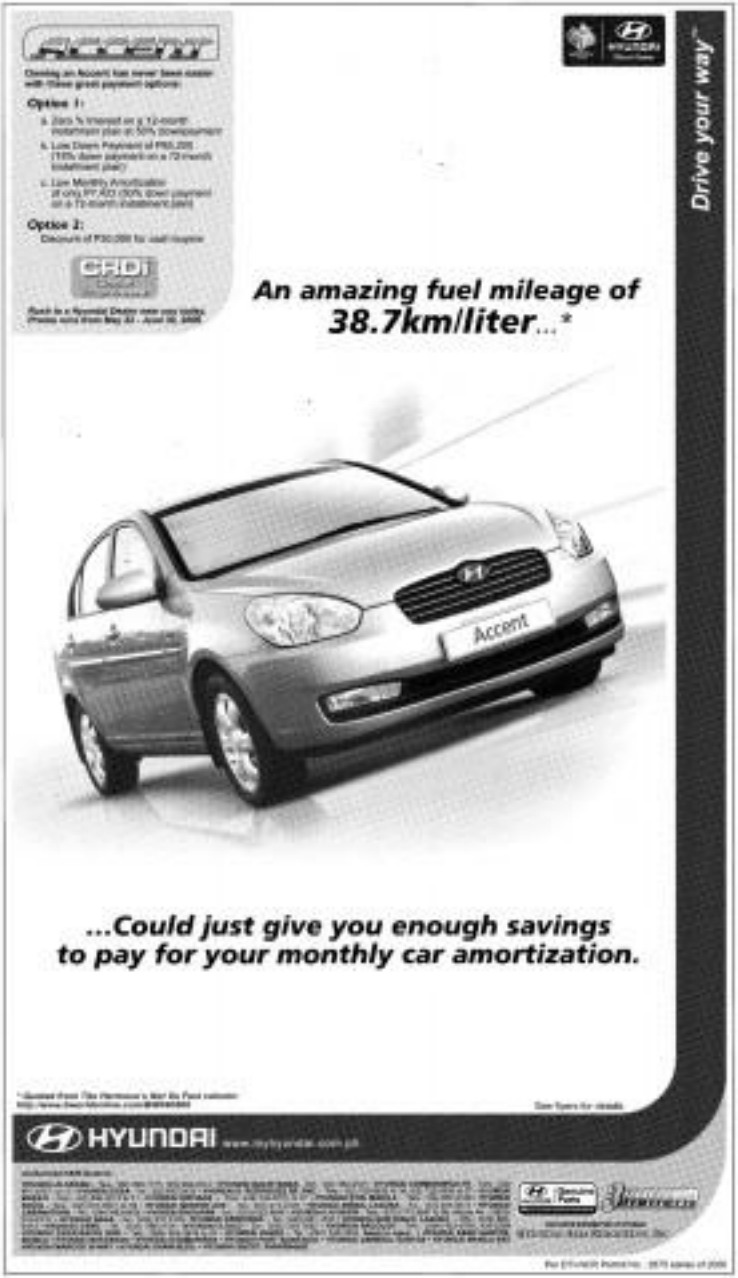
"In the instant case, considering the latitude of any guidelines or rules promulgated by the Senate to govern the conduct of its inquiries in aid of legislation or otherwise, it cannot be said, therefore, that the President, who had merely required prior consent from her officials, acted with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction by issuing the executive order in question," Nachura said.

He added: "Put differently, EO 464 did not violate any Senate rules or guidelines that could serve, in the least, as basis for the allegation that the President has committed any grave abuse of discretion. As such, it is premature for the Court to take cognizance of the present petitions."

According to Nachura, the presidential consent required for the executive or congressional inquiries of the officials described in the executive order was intended not only to ensure adherence to the doctrine on executive privilege but also to ensure respect for the rights of public officials appearing in congressional hearings (Sen).

Nachura asserted that the President may properly prohibit executive officials from appearing in congressional investigations by invoking the doctrine of executive privilege.

"The doctrine of executive privilege is founded upon the basic principle that in order for the President to carry out his constitutional responsibility to enforce the laws, he must be able to protect the confidentiality of certain types of documents and communications within the Executive Branch," he said.



Spirit behind efforts to help the less fortunate

By Fe Zamora

PEDRO DIAZ HOMES RIZAL PROvincial high school in 1953, she fancied herself for a year ahead as an out-of-school youth.

A year before, an older sister was accepted as a freshman at the University of the Philippines in Diliman. Basia knew that the meager family resources could cover by her as one of only two employed under technician father and dressmaker mother would have to go to her sister's daily needy.

During a summer-orientation program for graduating students at the Quezon City High School, Basia got hold of a leaflet from Pardum School.

"I was attracted to the 50:50 monthly allowances; I need not ask for money from my parents," she said in Filipino.

She applied, and was accepted for the Pardum School's Dorcas Training Scholarship. Program is Food and Beverages Services.

At that time, Basia said she did not know anything about the Pardum of Opus Dei, the controversial Catholic institution and moving spirit behind Pardum School.

Student becomes teacher

Today, 68-year-old Basia teaches baking to underprivileged girls as Pardum, gratefully returning the training she received as a scholar at the unique technical-training school located in San Juan.

Sin Josefa Escrivá

ESCRIVA: Opus Dei founder

Trained as a baker in Pardum, Basia worked in the Manila Peninsula for five years, and ran a vendor liner for a year, earning enough money to help her support two sisters through college and build a house for herself and her parents.

But she did not join Opus Dei, nor does she donate her salary to the organization.

Joining the Opus Dei is not my vocation, but I am very grateful for everything that I've learned in Pardum," Basia, a Pardum Regina Rhapsody Most Outstanding Worker awardee in 1996, said.

The regular spiritual formation imbued the Pardum scholars with such values as respect for others, punctuality, honesty, fidelity, trustworthiness, said Basia, who has a 4-year-old daughter with her husband, Manila Peninsula chief baker Rene Sheena.

100 percent employment

Graduates of Pardum are sought after by employers in the food industry, which have established partnerships with the institution.

"We have 100 percent employment after graduation," Lee M. Filmer, executive director, said.

In fact, about 500 graduates of the two-year diploma course in food and beverages services are currently employed in top hotels and restaurants here and abroad.

Pardum School started in the early '70s in a garage in New Manila. It was converted into a classroom for household helpers by a group of women who were inspired by the words of St. Josemaría Escrivá that love "to dwell, not travels."

Women volunteers gave lessons in cooking, sewing, flower arrangement and even English.

Not owned by Opus Dei

From there, Pardum moved to Mina Triangle. In 1975, the Foundations for Professional Training Inc. (FPTI), composed mainly of Opus Dei members, bought a five-story maternity clinic on M. Paterno Street in San Juan, and made it the Pardum School.

Today the Pardum complex quiet elegance, built in wooden floors, solid doors, hand-painted marriage with handmade moldings, a chandeliers and solid-wood pews in the chapel.

PUKLAKAN CENTER in San Juan helps train young women for hotel and restaurant work. [illegible]

Filmer stressed that the school is not owned by the Prelature of Opus Dei, but a "cooperate apostolate initiated by members and cooperators with the spiritual formation being entrusted to Opus Dei."

"We are committed to find better ways of helping underprivileged young women achieve integral and cultural excellence and acquire mastery of skills through a program based on Christian ideals. The goal is simple: To help them uplift their station and live a life in keeping with their human dignity," Filmer said.

Pardum is just one of about 60 centers and corporate apostolic undertakings by Opus Dei members and associates since the '50s. Their initiatives connect Opus Dei to the less privileged in society.

School for boys

In Barangay Tabon, Tay, Batangas, there's a 18-hectare farm where teenage boys learn modern stock-raising techniques and scientific breeding of butterflies. It also offers practical marketing, bookkeeping, basic hygiene, table manners, and reflections on the teachings of Opus Dei.

Called the Tabon Family Farm School, this unique learning institution is one of seven family farm schools established by the Hacienda Luisita Foundation.

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BENGUET ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

INVITATION TO A PRE-QUALIFICATION CONFERENCE AND SEALED BIDDING

Interested parties are hereby invited to a **PRE-QUALIFICATION CONFERENCE** and **SEALED BIDDING** for the installation of a **115kV OPTIC BACKBONE SYSTEM** for BENECO.

The **PRE-QUALIFICATION CONFERENCE** will be held on **May 23, 2006** at **10:00A.M.** at the Pamulaklakin Hall, BENECO Building, CPC Compound, Utility Road, Baguio City where the scope of work will be discussed.

Prospective bidders must submit their Company Profile, Income Tax Returns and Audited Financial Statements for the past three (3) years, Business Permit, Trade Name/ Company Registration Certificate and List of Customers.

SEALED BIDS must be received on or before **June 6, 2006** at **10:00A.M.** at the Pamulaklakin Hall, BENECO Building, CPC Compound, Utility Road, Baguio City. **OPENING OF BIDS** will be on the same date, time and venue.

Only those who were present during the Pre-Qualification Conference and who submitted the above-enumerated requirements will be allowed during the Bidding Proper.

BENECO reserves the right to reject any and all bids, waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid most advantageous to the BENECO.

THE PBAC

'Secular mentality but following Church agenda'

From page A1

The head of the Philippine incarnate of St. Jose Maria would create a reverent effect.

Intrigued

Such was the case with Amanda Capitle, 34, married, who followed columnist Hilarion Henares' tirades against Opus Dei published in the tabloids in the 1980s. Intrigued, Capitle decided to find out more. He attended a mass heart recollection at an Opus Dei center in Makati.

"I was attracted because of the spirit of friendship," the former swimming instructor says. Capitle is now a supernumerary while his wife is a cooperator. He studies at Fernbrook, an Opus Dei affiliated training center for aspirant supernumeraries, he observes the norms, among them daily Mass and regular confession, but he also finds time for an occasional drink with the guys in the neighborhood. Does he get a lot of flirting? See really, he says.

Time ver. To be a man. Priests from Escrivá that Capitle and fellow supernumerary Cesar Bautista look to Opus Dei members without your knowing it. Although members strictly follow the so-called "norms" such as daily Mass attendance, frequent confession (weekly at least), prayer and meditation and acts of mortification, they do not wear their affiliation on their lapel.

The numerarios who live at the Tanglaw University Center in Quezon City are mostly career women with day jobs outside the center.

Residence for numerarios

Dr. Lisa Ocampo teaches philosophy at the University of the Philippines while Lotis Jimlo handles client relations at the Philippine Science High School. Ang Gomez works with a non-government organization while Ancona Velasco is the center's director. All are graduates of UP.

When the lessons ended Tanglaw ran a marathon. A demonstration on scuba diving was going on. Some numerarios were at prayer while others were doing home chores or simply relaxing.

Tanglaw

Tanglaw is just one of several residences for numerarios in the Philippines. It is home to about 40 members and like other residences, the one has upper middle-class amenities including an air-conditioned chapel with a gilded altar and an auditorium. Tanglaw is not just a residence though, it is also a venue for seminars for students and professionals. Inside Tanglaw is clubhouse, a training center.

Numerarios who live together as a family (they do not call it community) do not keep their earnings, but they could ask for anything they need for "the work." So it is laptop, a cell phone, why, even a car. They do not have a vow of poverty but commit to a life of simplicity.

Regular lives, varied lifestyles

Even numerarios have to live in a way that is on the level of their real as in the world. For example, numerarios have to a residence for Opus Dei numerarios in posh Forbes Villages in Makati and is driven around by a chauffeur.

Not everyone rises to Opus Dei for good. "SP" joined Opus Dei as a numerary when he was 20 and in college student of De La Salle-University. He left after 10 years and is now married.

"I came to Opus Dei my vocation and appreciation of my Catholic faith," he tells the Inquirer. "It gave me an opportunity to find myself and to live myself as an adult and attainable path toward spiritual growth."

Why did he leave? "I guess at some point in my life I could not keep up with the daily struggle to live a life of prayer," SP confirm. "It's not that my vocation is dead or opposed to the grace of God as I had done in the past."

Supernumeraries live more regular lives and have varied lifestyles. One could be a taxi driver or a professor, a chef or a columnist like Inquirer's Belinda O. Olivares.

Writer and editor Monina Mallarey Mercado, like her late husband, advertising executive Antonio Mercado, is a supernumerary.

"Being in Opus Dei," Mercado says, "is not about joining a group but about opening one's heart to God." She joined at the age of 22 for study and reflection. Opus Dei, she says, is solidly based on freedom, doctrine and the scriptures.

"There is something wrong and human about the founder," she says, "and the other idiosyncrasies that there is a certain kind of intellectuality in the Opus Dei. She recalls what the founder once said. "How do you catch snake? Like fish, by the head."

Intellectuals

Estanislao himself says that newcomers should at least have the intellect of one who could pursue a master's degree or a doctorate, Many of them do.

Cambridge and Harvard-educated economist and business writer Jose Romero, a supernumerary of "of opus" as "in vitro" for 33 years, recalls his early encounters with founder's group.

"I was impressed by Opus's commitment to the professions. They were helped me with my research," he laughs.

When he found himself at the crossroads at some point, he decided to take the high road and joined Opus Dei that he sees can serve as his "spiritual guardian." Romero is involved in development foundations for the poor.

But supernumeraries are not always from the upper crust of society.

Those of humble means who might not have had higher education but who heard the call to "the work" have responded generously. But little is known about them, while those who move in lofty places are often viewed with suspicion. What might be their agenda?

Thrust into the open

Author and Toledo journalist John Allen writes that there's an Opus Dei of myth and an Opus Dei of reality. "The myth," he says, "conceives an overall, often wealthy and ultra-powerful brotherhood acting at the heart of Roman Catholicism, harboring dark secrets and exercising vast unaccountability."

But Dan Brown, author of the best-seller "The Da Vinci Code," didn't invent the profile, Allen says. The group had already acquired it decades ago. There had to be reasons.

Most stubbornly clung into the name via a solid plot of a murder and then, "Da Vinci" is doing what looks like a perfect moment to open itself more fully, rid itself of ghosts past, and beckon, as Jesus did to those who doubted, "Come and see."

Republic of the Philippines
National Transmission Corporation

Section 4.

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Supply and Delivery of Goddess Units
(Reference No. PBB0025-12-2005)

1. The National Transmission Corporation, hereafter called Owner (TRANSCO) now through the [illegible] invites prospective bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery of [illegible] Goddess units.

2. The Goddess units to be supplied under this contract [illegible] Goddess of the Philippines, a corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the Philippines with principal office at [illegible] Quezon City, Philippines.

3. Eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below from [illegible] and during office hours from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the bidding documents in the amount of [illegible] pesos (P[illegible]). It may be downloaded free of charge from the website of the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) provided that bidders shall pay the non-refundable fee for the bidding documents not later than the submission of their bids.

4. A pre-bid conference shall be held at the venue mentioned below on [illegible] 2005 at 10:00 A.M. [illegible] All prospective bidders are invited to attend.

5. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before [illegible] 2005 at 10:00 A.M. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in any of the following forms and amounts:

Form of Security	Amount
a. Cash, cashier's/manager's check, bank draft/guarantee or irrevocable letter of credit issued by a reputable bank	Php [illegible]
b. Bid bond issued by a surety or guarantee company	Php [illegible]
c. Surety bond callable upon demand issued by a surety or guarantee company	Php [illegible]

6. [illegible] shall be valid for a period not exceeding [illegible] days from the date of the opening of bids.

7. The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

8. For further information, please refer to:

[illegible]
Chairman, BAC Secretariat
Tel. No. (02) [illegible]
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Chairman, BAC
Tel. No. (02) [illegible]
Fax No. (02) [illegible]

Activities	Schedule
1. Deadline for submission of letter of intent and [illegible]	May 31, 2006
2. Eligibility Screening	May 30 - June 6
3. Issuance of Bidding Documents	May 30 - June 6
4. Pre-Bid Conference	June 6
5. Deadline for Submission of Bids	June 20
6. Opening of Bids	June 20
7. Bid Evaluation	June 20 - July 4
8. Post-Qualification	July 5 - July 18
9. Approval and Notice of Award	July 19 - July 25
10. Contract Signing	July 26 - August 1
11. Notice to Proceed	August 2

For inquiries, assistance in Eligibility Statement and Bidding Documents, and Bidding Procedures, the following contact person(s) may be [illegible]

Name: [illegible]
Chairman, BAC Secretariat
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Fax No. (02) [illegible]

Leftist activist abducted, but cops doubt report

By Luige A. del Puerto and Tarra Y. Quismundo

YET ANOTHER PO-litical activist has been abducted, this time in Makati City or maybe?

Party-list group Bayan Muna claimed yesterday that one of its members, Rolando Rafols Nuñez, a veteran of the Olivo Quarter Storm, was snatched by three men in Barangay Olympia around noon Saturday.

"Three unidentified men grabbed Rafael then dragged [him into] an [Asian Terra] van," said Bayan Muna deputy secretary general Roberto de Castro in a text message to the Inquirer.

Bayan Muna was quick to blame Malacañang for Rafael's disappearance.

"GMA's [President Macapagal-Arroyo's] death squad (is) now operating in Manila," said De Castro, adding that Pastor was the 146th victim of forced disappearances since 2001 and the 15th this year.

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Judicial statesmanship

WHEN CHIEF JUSTICE ARTEMIO PANGANIBAN made his speech before the Georgetown Law Center, he was not only addressing a body of lawyers, he was speaking to an institution of higher learning that has taken an interest in the Philippines for several generations. Since 1957, Philippine presidents have received degrees honoris causa from Georgetown, and President Macapagal-Arroyo considers herself to be something of an alumna of the institution.

EDITORIAL

The Chief Justice was also speaking to an audience whose familiarity with the status of the law in our country has been deflated by The New York Times editorial that came out earlier this year and warned of the dangers of creeping authoritarianism. It was this disturbing development that Panganiban directly confronted in his speech. His remarks validated the opinion held both here and abroad, that the executive department has made attempts to assert and wield powers that are contrary to basic liberties and democracy.

Panganiban said that under his watch, the Supreme Court has managed to "safeguard the liberty of our people and to nurture their prosperity, while upholding the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary." He pointed out that the court's recent rulings on Executive Order 464, the Calibrated Preemptive Response and Proclamation 1017 are "landmark" rulings, which serve to uphold "the primacy of civil liberties over governmental actions."

His message was clear, unambiguous, and, we might add, necessary: Political and civil rights are not expendable, period—and certainly not in the name of progress. Panganiban said what many have said before (including former Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. in his fact-finding commission's report on corrupt) and which should be said again and again: "Filipinos may endure occasional hunger, but they will never tolerate injustice and indignity for long."

As Panganiban eloquently put it, "Liberty becomes the guarantee that, free from all interference and suppression, we all can conceive of the good life and act according to those conceptions. I venture the proposition that a society suckled by such liberty is prosperous. "Liberty and prosperity must go hand in hand. They reinforce and complement—even protect—each other, and without one, the other is impossible, or only an approximation of what could be.

For the American audience listening to Panganiban's speech, his words were comforting. For Filipinos at home hearing about his remarks, it is reassuring to know that the world is being told that indeed, as Panganiban optimistically ruled one of his recent books, the country may be undergoing a "judicial renaissance." If the Davide Court was primarily interested in maximizing efficiency and accomplishing a modernization of the judiciary, the Panganiban Court may yet go down in history as one dedicated to re-consecrating the judiciary to its historic role as defender of the people's liberties.

But saying what he said, did more than just reassure audiences abroad and here. Statements of an official nature serve to raise the bar for conduct. It would be difficult, for the remainder of the Chief Justice's term, for either he or his colleagues to issue rulings that are inferior to what they have already penned. This is the essence of micromanaging: to raise the bar, and put forward a degree of dedication and even performance that exceeds expectations.

Like all the major institutions of our country, the Supreme Court has been subjected to an erosion of prestige and confidence among the public. To a certain extent, confidence has been restored. We hope that the Chief Justice knows that he has only begun to make his mark. A challenge to the Supreme Court remains. It must not only issue rulings that firmly defend the people's rights. It must also now set about issuing rulings in a timely manner, in that together with a vigorous defense of the public good comes an effective bar to officials abusing the law because those whose writs the courts have clapped can still claiming that it was worth it, since they accomplished what they wanted to do, regardless of their eventually having been judged to have acted illegally.

A 1-2-3 in Masinloc power plant deal?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

LAST WEEK, THE NOVEMBER-0 CAME OUT with the news that a Malaysian firm, Rimbill Power Berhad, came to the rescue of financially strapped 1500 Pacific Corporation that had won the bidding for the coal-fired Masinloc power plant of the National Power Corp. The 600-MW plant is the largest ever to be sold in Napocor's privatization efforts. The 1500 Consortium won the bidding with what some critics call "an obscenely high" bid of P302 million, until almost the entire price set by the government, and almost double the bid of First Gen. Corp. amounting to $171 million. So officials of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), the government agency in charge of the sales, were ecstatic. They were seeing plenty of dollar signs in the clouds.

But it turned out to be a mirage. And the recent waves by Rimbill have crash.

The bid conditions require the winning bidder to pay up front 40 percent of the bid price (in the case of 1500, $122 million) less out of its $302 million bid) 270 days after the award date, plus an $11-million performance bond as a guarantee that 1500 would pay the 2nd phase price. But two-and-a-half years later 1500 has not yet paid even the down payment. Under the terms of the bidding, PSALM can already foreclose the $11-million performance bond, but it refuses to do that because of greed.

Greed is what makes victims easy prey to swindlers. Victims of pyramid scams, double-your-money and grim-n-gain and similar scams are lured because they are tempted by plenty of easy money promised by the swindlers. Something similar is happening to the stalled Masinloc plant sale.

Although early on, doubts were raised about the financial capability of the winning bidders (Gen. Gen. Corp.'s paltry net worth and the credibility of 1500 whose officers, he claimed, were in an address in Brunei's that turned out to be leased to a garment sewing), PSALM was hypnotized by the unusually high bid price.

Malaysian company, Rimbill Berhad, had taken over the Australians' share in the consortium. Rimbill would be the white knight that would bail out the $34.2 million performance bond and the $222 million up-front payment that would seal the deal.

Rimbill's takeover from Great Pacific is not sanctioned by PSALM's own bidding rules. A potential purchaser's financial capability and track record must be screened and proven to be impeccable by the bid documents or, at prior to, the bidding. But PSALM turned a blind eye to these violations.

Soon enough the itch surfaced. On April 18, 2006, the newspapers reported that Rimbill had dropped the $34.2 million performance bond. But it turned out that Rimbill's entry into the deal was not as straightforward as it appeared. Rimbill had stipped in as a condition to the effectivity of (and not merely as a condition to drawing on) the bond that Masinloc first be assured of a supply contract with Meralco.

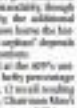
Meralco has nothing to do with it. It is a totally different and independent entity. Even Rimbill expects the government to force Meralco to sign a supply contract with 1500 Corp.'s Rimbill's bid mysteriously high price. 1500 is obligated to pay for Masinloc, the resulting high-priced contract will result in horrendously high power rates for consumers.

Rimbill's condition changes the terms of Masinloc's auction. Masinloc was bidded out as a merchant plant and a valid performance bond was required to be posted. Now, Meralco someone was guaranteed or not to buy Masinloc's power. A supply contract with Meralco changes the basic assumptions of the bidding. Had Masinloc been bidded out with a supply contract, certainly other bidders would have submitted higher bids.

The trick has become evident. 1500 bested out its competition with a very high bid price and now it is changing the terms of the auction.

Pinoy int'l peacekeepers as milking cows

PASSION FOR REASON



Raul C. Pangalangan

HOW DISAPPOINTING TO HEAR THAT THE Armed Forces now wants to take a 40-percent cut from the pay of Filipino soldiers who serve as UN peacekeepers abroad! The Pinoy soldier has been welcomed and lionized by while he risks life and limb in the most turbid of hotspots that, finally under the watchful eye of international auditors, the Pinoy soldier serving abroad would get his due. How naive it was to think that he could free himself from the clutches of hand-me-grabbers.

The Philippines is one of international peacekeepers is of recent vintage, though the roles have been in place since 1945 when the United Nations was created. The UN largely operates through moral suasion and consent-based sanctions, except for the Security Council which does have the power to "take measures to restore international peace and security." When the Council takes "Chapter VII action" under the UN Charter, it calls on UN member states to contribute their troops to "enforce, meet action." However, except for occasional successes like in the 1991 Gulf War, in most cases the Council was effectively choked during the Cold War, since both the United States and the first, or Union held veto powers in the Council.

That all changed with the Kremlin's demise, and the full meaning of Chapter VII sprang anew. In the period, there is a big step in the September 1991 Operation Desert Storm against Saddam Hussein, when American Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf led multinational troops in the "liberation" of Kuwait. Closer to home, the UK has also sent its "thin Britons" to Cambodia and to Sierra Leone—and Filipino soldiers were there. Today, they are deployed in more hot spots: Haiti, Liberia, the Golan [the list is clinches a military Filipino in deployment].

I was happy for these Filipino-enlisted men. Finally, a chance to work and get paid (probably) to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with foreign friends, and earn a UN service medal, another feather in the cannon of proud warriors.

I had assumed all the while that the Filipino soldier was paid as much as his foreign counterparts (they supposedly get some $1,000 per month). God's contrary to that. The additional pay to the soldier who shall have borne the brunt, and (as) his widow and his orphan" depends on the wealth and poverty of nations.

The AFP has always assumed as the 40% unilateral decision to share off a hefty percentage from the soldiers' allowances. (I recall reading newspapers that in the 1970s, Chairman Marcos's government used to collect the pay of Chinese international civil servants, and then merely disbursed to them a pathetically meager allowance. I understand that the Chinese state still has echoes of Yan Ming's NBA paycheck.)

The AFP repeatedly justifies its 40 percent cut as reimbursements for the cost of training and preparations. (The PMO contingent to be posted to much of the AFP and those bus go to Iraq.) After all, the Pinoy line believes do not emerge spontaneously in the 101 camps, "learned" out there is a true. Certainly they were trained in Philippine barracks, by Filipino officers, and served by a staff of administrators. There is a cost to all that, and, with creative accounting, enough to justify the 40 percent take. My instinct is to cut to the chase the numbers to support that claim and let the books to upload all costs to "training and preparations." (Hopefully what the AFP "incurred" up-front is fixed, per what it collects from the soldier a open-ended and cost, added long after the "investment" had been recovered. Now if only that God-given creativity was put to blessed purposes ... Yeh, riiii.)

It is not the reckoning of the cost alone that is debatable, but also its allocation. To think that cost to the soldier is unfair. Why should he subsidize the Philippine government's contribution to the UN Security Council? All taxpayers contribute to that subsidy to offset the 40-percent levy concentrates the burden on the peacekeeper himself, on top of the burden that all soldiers are sworn to bear and from which ordinary taxpayers are spared, namely the risk of dying on the line of duty.

It is high time that the matter be put in order. The Philippine economy will continue to rely on foreign remittances for a while, and the Filipino soldier and his family can surely use the occasional legitimate windfall from UN peacekeeping overseas. At the same time, UN blue helmet operations seem on the rise and will flourish in the coming years, as the global community flexes its muscle and realizes that, today, the real battle is against abusive local powers, whether they are genocidal maniacs, bloodthirsty warlords, or paranoid elites. Filipino blue helmets speak well of our nation's commitment to humanitarian goals.

First, the Filipino peacekeepers must be assured a much fairer, competitive processes, free from the clutches of padrino. None of that fact-finding soldiers' pay be for the who have joined the queue and bypass months ranks. None, I hope, of those returning soldiers repeatedly sought to attempted smuggling, who claim the record of those who have served honorably.

Second, the Filipino peacekeeper must receive his pay without illicit deductions on whatever excuse. Those for administrative are finally formal agreements among sovereigns, and cannot—to borrow the words of the Supreme Court in its PP 1017 decision—be "stifled with," the way the government does with only with the Philippine Constitution.

Comments to pascualraul@gmail.com

Leftists' purge and death squads

ANALYSIS

Amanda Dimaisip

THE BRUTAL LAST WEEK OF MARCH, MARCH was the month of Bayan Muna, brought to 733 the number of leftist activists killed since 2001, of which 93 were Bayan Muna members. It also saw the forcible profile of what appears to be a reinvented the anti-communist witch-hunt which swept the country in the 1950s and 1970s.

The massive, organized executions from the outset, say that the latest wave of killings is part of the internal "cleansing" within the Communist Party. But the Left blamed the killings on government security forces.

Whatever is responsible, the number of Left-wing militants killed during the past five years is staggering. It approaches behind that all 533 were killed by Ferdinand Marcos, even if we assume that there has been a non-losing internal purge in the Communist Party since the 1980s, when a number of them were condemned to death "killing fields," mainly in Davao, at the height of their factional power struggle.

In the history of the communist insurgency in the Philippines there has not been so many incidents since killed since the height of the Huk rebellion in the 1950s and the anti-communist campaign of President Marcos in the 1970s against the then President's limit. Most of the casualties date since from the communist Party since the 1980s, when a number of the Philippines and the now defunct Philippine Communist. It was a complicated conflict between the military and the communist guerrillas.

If the stated of the military—that the deaths are a result of "internal cleansing"—the purge is very much the communist insurgency has acquired a new dimension, an intensification of the phenomenon where the "revolution devours its own children." It is open to question, including the Arroyo administration. This is what makes the "internal cleansing" theory hard to believe.

Then, the question becomes unavoidable: Why is the administration risking the tremendous hope it has built up in the past few years by going after the Left in a ruthless revolution? Another question: Is the regime serving the communist agenda as a [illegible] the rebellion came to a head upon a "Bandung line" of revolution on the pages of the 1980s, he added.

This means the government has been taking up to [illegible] party cadres in the past to lead to rebellion complaints, triggered by the alleged "internal alliance" of the leftist leaders in a "conspiracy" with military officers accused of alleged involvement in the 26 August.

No evidence has not been introduced by the government to show to what may the rebels lead, etc. plotted with the military officers, including Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim of the Army Special Action Force. The [illegible] to introduce in evidence now that Lim and his officers would announce their withdrawal of support for the Arroyo administration and their join a civilian rally in Makati to spark a people power uprising.

The purpose of the [illegible] to have misplaced in shots of a Left-Right "conspiracy" on the pressure in the Makati streets of Left-wing groups rousing civil movements and slogans demanding the ouster of the Arroyo.

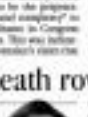
The [illegible] of the Bayan Muna leaders not be rebellion case marks the first legal action against members of the communist movement. So at least to mainstream factions since they joined the parliamentary system of Philippine politics by participating in the party-list system in the 1998 polls. The effort to link them to the military groups associated with employing semi-conventional means to change the political leadership therefore interrupts the avowed reward remaining the Left away from armed insurrection and absorbing it in parliamentary politics.

The fact that most of the victims of the recent killings were Bayan Muna members indicates that the government considers this the parliamentary wing of the communist movement as far as threat to regime survival it is examined with the military right wing. From this perspective, the immediate of the party-list representatives to a short [illegible] could be the main [illegible] target.

It does not look like the objectives of the Left into the middle ground of Philippine politics.

Women on death row

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

IN THE DAYS BEFORE JOSIE SOMARA, THE FIRST Filipina woman on death row facing lethal injection, was set to receive the ultimate penalty, she was visited by a parade of well-wishers. I think she may also have had the media coverage on her behalf, but not taken out, then President Joseph Estrada had a change of heart and commuted her penalty to life imprisonment to drug trafficking, as the implementation.

Today, having proven herself an adept painter, Somara is busy [illegible] residing to the "reputable artists" in the field, and is also the chair Nanita is drafting of passing law in charge.

Some days [illegible], artist offers to all the women in the CIW in "my women," there are now 51 women on death row, some of whom are illegal drug mules who got caught and who, as of late of [illegible] with the other women prisoners. Indeed, going by the accounts of the authors of "Dolorous Rotation, Poignant Voices: The Women on Death Row in the Philippines," a book launched on December 7 anyone could have a choice about where to be incarcerated, the CIW room such a bad place to be.

Even then, despite the relatively benign environment at the CIW, Basha details the chaos among the women, who "are easily and unusual provocations," adding the audience at the book launch. "Interrogate profiled living day after day just waiting to die." Though President Macapagal-Arroyo has commuted the death sentences of all those sentences to life imprisonment, [illegible] pointed out that the law [illegible] the death penalty still exists, so there's still [illegible] continue lobbying for the repeal of the law.

* * *

THE TITLE comes behind "**Invisible Realities, Forgotten Voices**," though, authors chose that debunking the politics and selection of the death penalty [illegible] the [illegible] of the women. The foremost aim of the study, they said, was to "make visible" the invisible women on death row. "They may be small in number," said [illegible] Santos, who headed the research team, "but it has a big impact on society. Just a longer impact on them, their families and on society."

"Invisible Realities, Forgotten Voices" is a joint project of the Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PhilRights) and the Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization (Watpro), with funding support from the European Union. Assistance from [illegible], the rest of the team is composed of Mrs. Rosalyn Mendoza, Marlyn Manuel and Sister Elizabeth Perfecto.

Of the 28 women on death row whom the research team can [illegible] as of mid-2004, only 11 consented to participate in the study, after the team met with them and explained to them what it was for, they said, as well as its limitations. Including the fact that participation in the study was no guarantee that their cases would be reviewed. Of the 11 women respondents, four were foreigners, two of whom are Filipinos who married foreigners and were arrested for drug offenses; while the team [illegible] some stories such as the four most common crimes for which women on death row were convicted: kidnapping, drug-related offenses, parricide and murder.

* * *

RESEARCH on the four case studies involved multiple in-depth interviews with the prisoners who agreed to tell their stories, as well as interviews with their family members, lawyers and others who could verify/corroborate their stories.

Somara said they also went out of their way to review and debunk what Basha called "the myths that surround the issue," because even if we most parishioners, certain details could still get [illegible]. The authors [illegible] were to debunk the myths that would jeopardize the women's appeals, though she admits that at least for the case study she handled [illegible] of Catherine, whose story was recounted in this book [illegible] she personally convinced that Catherine didn't deserve the death penalty.

The women in the study had certain things in common: "none of them had previous convictions prior to receiving the death sentence; nine were in their most productive years [illegible] 31 and 40 years old at the time of receiving [illegible] without counsel or doubt, nor is now 64 years old; four were illiterate, while 6 of the 11 had only reached [illegible] elementary level; and they were being abused by their partners, parents who invariably had a hand in bringing them into contact with drugs."

The women's responsiveness, including facing the death sentence, also invariably punished their "significant others," especially their children. Many said their school-age children had to stop schooling, while [illegible] were not knowledge of criminality. Four women left young children and their offspring were staying with "[illegible] caregivers," that is, they had been parceled out to relatives to be [illegible] to themselves. "Basically," as Jimenez put it.

* * *

"**CLOSED, BARRED** since imitation to manifestation of the [illegible] of society, including legal and judicial processes," is the picture there, making that this title "[illegible] how women are viewed as subjects of the law."

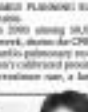
The study recommends the "modernization of the criminal justice system" to make it more responsive to gender and human rights concerns. It also calls for the formation of support groups or networks for women on death row [and] simply for all women in prison), with the authorities making [illegible] to communicate "awareness-building on women issues."

We may not think of a woman—wife and mother—when we think about the people in our lives who are [illegible] to us, the author says. Are we ready as a society to commemorate the execution of a woman? And if not, are we saying that only men deserve to be executed?

Side effects

THE DOHMARKET'S ANNUAL PUBLIC PLANNING SURvey are becoming almost unsurprising.

The latest survey, conducted in 2000 among 10,000 households and released [illegible] the week, shows the CPR to be 48.3 percent. "CPR" here isn't earth-pulmonary resuscitation or the Arroyo administration's celebrated preemptive response, but contraceptive prevalence rate, a fancy term for family planning usage. The National Statistics Office (NSO), which is responsible for conducting the survey, notes that the CPR has not increased in the last five years.



PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

The release of the FPS statistics came only a few days after Institute Planning Secretary Romulo Neri came out with the claim that the country's annual population growth rate had changed from 2.36 percent to 2.04 percent. Neri came under fire after the administration as people wondered how he could make this claim when the government has not conducted a nationwide census since 2000.

The release of the latest FPS shows that Neri is beginning in the area of family planning, or is sensitive to major subjects imbued in the [illegible] of the Arroyo administration. Neri's claim [illegible] came true shortly after Neri's announcement moving the drop in population growth rate and suggesting that family planning funds now be transferred to school-building projects.

The Neri-Dohmarket statistics responding to bad publicity from the latest Social Weather Stations survey no longer in Filipino households. I wonder though if she has ever wondered if there's a connection between hunger and rapid population growth, one which is likely to continue if family planning usage remains at its current low rates.

Let me put this in [illegible] numbers. Para, the national average of 48 percent reflects wide disparities. Cagayan Valley has the highest CPR with 68 percent, while the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has a dismal 26 percent. The National Capital Region (NCR) has a rate of 44 percent, lower than the national average.

One reason the dismal CPR of 48 percent is so [illegible] is that we can't seem to at least break the 50 percent mark, even as other countries all over the world are racing ahead. To give a few examples from among our neighbors, Vietnam has a CPR of 76 percent; Thailand, 72 percent; Singapore, 62 percent; and Indonesia, 60 percent.

In short, we're not doing very well on the family planning score despite modern methods, meaning those that are reliable. In the Philippines, the 48 percent figure includes some 13 percent who are using methods like withdrawal, a crude method with a very high rate of failure.

* * *

Why aren't more Filipinos using family planning? The main reason, one which has persisted through the years, has not been religion. Muslim leaders in Mindanao, for example, issued a fatwa or religious edict a few years ago supporting family planning. And while Roman Catholic bishops oppose "artificial" methods, they have not been very strong with using family planning have never heard of the papal encyclical the matter. Hear, or the theological explanations of the "natural" and "procreative" functions of marriage which are used to [illegible] "artificial" contraception.

What [illegible] Filipinos have heard are stories of "side effects" of family planning methods. In a research I conducted a few years back, these fears revolve mainly around the pill, with perceived dangers ranging from severe to putting on weight. It should say quickly that many low-income women are sadly into the weight gain as a good thing, a sign that they had a good fit or tipong with a particular brand.)

There are also "side effects" described for some modern methods. Tubal ligation, for example, is believed by many to lead to increased libido for the woman... and a potential for extramarital affairs.

The IUD is even more unfounded, based on hearsay as well as popular misconceptions about how the body works. for example, pills are believed to cause cancer because they are taken daily, leading residues (lason) in the uterus that accumulate.

The connection between tubal ligation and increased libido may have been based partly on husbands' (and others') observations that women are more sexually responsive and relaxed after the ligation. This shouldn't be surprising, considering that the fear of an unwanted pregnancy has been removed, not to repeat that with symptothermic and contraceptive) progression supplies a better management.

The male imagination (that is, many of the fears around contraception are really male-based. The irony is that as our family planning program weakens, men become even more powerful.

How so? The misconceptions going around in relation to family planning are often perpetuated by a mixed bunch of men. A moral few are opposed to family planning for religious reasons, but others couldn't care less about religion, their opposition based on non-issues values that impact masculinity such having as many children as possible. Opposition from husbands is the main reason why [illegible] with a fear of side-effects as the main reason for women wanting to drop out of family planning.

* * *

Perhaps what's so painful about the FPS findings is that women are getting the worst of both worlds, having and [illegible] even willing to pay for services and methods. By their access to family planning has been shrinking under the present government.

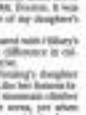
The President claims she is in favor of choices, and, claiming that our needs had been ignored here "in official" family planning policy for the past 20, she has called for more resources to be poured into natural family planning (NFP). The Catholic organization Couples for Christ received P40 million from the Department of Health (DOH), and the DOH has, for the record, been [illegible] NFP. But the impact doesn't show in the FPS, which found NFP usage so far as a measly 0.6 percent. Propaganda is one thing, and resources another. Most women [illegible] as to quote spending more misconceptions about "artificial" methods rather than promoting natural family planning itself.

Less family planning usage has many side effects for the country. And who are the biggest losers in all this? It's the women, who are [illegible] of unwanted pregnancies, many of which [illegible] in the form of [illegible] themselves having to raise children in shame in the most abused. It's the children who have, with poorer health and nutrition, and higher dropout rates from schools.

There's a story going around about one shy mayor in Isabela who asked his parish priest, "Father, we have so many unwed children now. Could you allow them to sleep in your church?" The priest hesitated, and then explained that it would be too difficult for him to handle so many children. The wise mayor smiled and said, "Then, father, would you [illegible] spiel when I promote family planning?"

History of mountain climbing in RP

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

THE SUCCESSFUL FILIPINO ASCENT TO MT. Everest is something that needs national pride in the battle cry at which Manny Pacquiao literally down but bridging Mexican. The only difference is that there was no [illegible] TV coverage this time, this marching the [illegible] networks trying to outdo each other with very entertaining [illegible]. Then there is the claim by another Filipino who had climbed Everest earlier but didn't get the same attention because he was part of a multi-racial team's summit by competing TV stations.

On May 29, 1953, Edmund Hillary and his guide Tenzing Norgay made the first successful ascent to the top of Mt. Everest. The news was so satellite-fresh at the time, on the news was not yet powered until June 2 to add spice to the coronation of Elizabeth II.

If you browse through the Internet, you will find dozens of websites dedicated to Everest. What more is [illegible] when hooked the expedition manager's husband to be first, while his guide, who remains 40th with shock and pulled the white man up, crashing on the crevasse. When asked the same question, Tenzing is shocked, for he thought everyone knew that they ascended "as a team." Thus, Hillary had to wait till Tenzing's death in 1986 to name the climb that he was first.

Pilot Hillary books and interviews with Johnny Carson, the [illegible] Tenzing's life story [illegible] to [illegible] the difference in perception: Sirs with Tenzing and Sirs with Hillary. The Western mind seems to think the mountain was for "because it's there" but also to place the flag [illegible] the mountain. Tenzing is illiterate. The Sherpa people were Buddhist as part of the interview, something to be added, to be known and worshipped. I found a translation of Tenzing's account of that historic [illegible] and [illegible].

"I dug a hole in the snow and put down some small sacrifice, symbolic gifts that I had brought with me that our belief—my wife and I are Buddhists—demands. Preferably I wanted as much [illegible] as possible, but now that was not possible. Instead I left a few biscuits, some chocolates, and a little pen. The blue pen had just a whole paper with me to sacrifice. It was a pleasing feeling that my family items had certainly acted me to get the pen on the summit of Mt. Everest. It was quite an ordinary pen, but one of my daughter's chosen things."

This paragraph alone, compared with Hillary's boasting, says a lot about the difference in cultures, the differences in perspective.

Is it not such stories that Tenzing's daughter Nima lived in the Philippines. Like her famous father, she was an accomplished mountain climber herself, scaling heights in her teens, yet when she called, she resisted the least publicity of parents in the form of grandiose write-ups [illegible] Not fishing. While she may resemble her father, she was not trained to give her hand to her Filipino husband on that side what takes by Water Prize of Greece. That nobody in the TV newsrooms knew about it is [illegible] it is not newsworthy, or how little background research is being done in television news.

While it was interesting to hear the native emotional and native remarks of the relatives of Tenzing, I was more interested in [illegible] added more perspective to get a second layer from the daughter of Tenzing who not only married a Filipino but who knew Everest first-hand. What [illegible] will you get what reporters ask the parents and relatives back home what they think of her mom their new features one morning from on?

Perhaps people should have included more Nima Tenzing Galang on her children and asked about her humble time previous were in the house of Everest, a sacrificial gift given in 1953. Perhaps the TV reporters rewarding on the humble

The real Philippine Constitution

THE REAL FUNDAMENTAL Law of the land is our country is not the 1987 Constitution but the debt conditions imposed on us by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The poverty and injustice torturing the Filipino masses are the bondbreath of those conditions, not of the Constitution.

And the real purpose of the Charter change movement is to keep President Macapagal-Arroyo in power, in her capacity as the selfformer of the IMF-WB debt conditionalities in our country.

What are those debt conditionalities?

The first is unsustainable debt service. More than one-third of our annual national budget is unconstitutionally allocated for debt service; it is not subject to congressional scrutiny, although the Constitution provides that no money shall be taken out of the Treasury except by an act of Congress. Moreover, the allocation exceeds the limit for education which, under the Constitution, ought to be the biggest.

The second is the IMF line. IMF-GATT conditionalities are the ones that have been dictated by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional, but the decision has been reversed since. The first Supreme Court decision was in keeping with the 1987 Constitution; the second bars the unconstitutional IMF-GATT debt conditions.

In 1995, there was an omnibus WB-IMF debt conditions (Philippine economics as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the restructuring of Philippine politics as the imposition of globalization through liberalization, deregulation, privatization and level playing field.

The fourth is the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira). The law is anathema for the release of some $900 million in loans already approved by the WB-IMF. With the Epira, the government's generation and transmission assets are now being sold to foreign power players.

The fifth is the Mining Act of 1995. This was first declared

EZ2 SUERTRES
24 2 8 1 6
SIX DIGIT (All 6 numbers combined)
6 9 2 2 3 7

Across the NATION

SUPERLOTTO 6/49
4 5 17 28 38 43
P15,664,455.00

Sorsogon town killings alarm execs

IROSIN, SORSOGON—AT LEAST 12 PERSONS have been assassinated in this town over the past eight months in what was described as vendetta killings between government forces and the New People's Army.

The victims were members of the armed forces and the Philippine National Police and those suspected of being supporters of the NPA.

The killings prompted the local government unit to call for a social, 6-sectoral peace dialogue Thursday (May 18) to bring back peace to the town.

Mayor Lilia Gonzales described the situation as alarming and called on all sectors to join in the effort "to bring back peace and to stop the roaring gongs from ruining (their) ears (calling) for."

"The situation is now roaring from among our people and is already affecting the business sector," she told Roman participants who included barangay officials, Church leaders, municipal council members, employees, businessmen, youth and ordinary citizens.

Gonzales said there is now similar to other areas in the country where government forces and those identified with left-leaning organizations were being killed with impunity.

The killings started on Oct. 23 last year with the assassination of PO3 Jose Esmod, a member of the town's police force, said police chief Rodelo Imop. Thierry Lacerda.

The NPA branch's statement owned up responsibility for the killing.

On Oct. 27, a member of the Philippine Army identified as Antonio de Gorsa was killed in an attack believed perpetrated by the NPA.

Three days later a Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) member, Arnel Cogola, was shot dead inside the town's cockpit while on Nov. 16, the detachment commander of an army unit in Barangay Cabao, Tiga. Sigma, was killed.

The killings resumed in January with the death of Bienbo Guardacano, a militiaman.

This was followed by the assassination of municipal councilor Alan Frivaldo, a member of the militant group Bayan Muna.

In February, another Cafgu member, Armando Urgado, brother of Jolene, was also slain inside the cockpit, said in March a certain Rupio Rimas (Rumas) killed.

In April, Sgt. Julio Alfiles and Cafgu Allan Talosa were ambushed in Barangay Gumapis and on May 9, Barangay Captain Noel Penalosa of Cabao was assassinated.

The latest killing occurred last May 13 with the death of Usmapo. Rubio, a former NPA member trained Army personnel.

Sr. Jimmy Ramos, the town's parish priest, appealed to both sides and to all sectors to help bring back normalcy and peace to the town.

The priest stressed the importance and sanctity of life and the people's basic right to it.

Councilor Iris Michelena, peace and order council chairman, asked the population to cooperate and help the authorities put an end to the spate of killings.

—Bobby Lalubar

ROUNDUP

Militiaman kill 4

KAMBA, Sarangani—At least four people, including a 10-year-old boy, were killed after they were shot by two militiamen in Barangay Tambak here, police said Thursday. The victims were identified as Ferdinand Mosonio, 31, and his younger brother Rolando, 29; Isaac Mendoza and 10-year-old Ronel Quillo-an. The suspects, Erwin Lagliva and Alexander Caprosita, were arrested. Senior Insp. Leo Sao, Kiamba police chief, said the suspects had engaged the Mosonio brothers on Tuesday evening. The attack was witnessed by Mendoza and Quillo-an, but said the suspects shot the witnesses. However, Guillermo was still alive and was able to tell relatives who unloaded him to Polomolok. The 68-year-old mother of the Mosonio brothers said that on Sunday, the suspects also fired at their house and wounded her daughter in the process. She said she could not understand why the militiamen were so angry with his son. **Apolina Jones, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

8 still missing

SUBIC CITY—Eight crewmembers of a fishing boat that capsized in Subic at the height of tropical storm Caloy remain missing. Search and rescue operations are ongoing to the waters of Masinloc for the crew members of the ship Ariel Marvin, according to reports of the Office of Civil Defense in Western Visayas. The boat capsized in Caridad Island in Subic last week due to strong winds and huge waves. The missing persons were identified as Roberto Limpiado, Jerald Bartolome, Rusty Mahinay, Jimbo de Angel, Ernesto Lumidao, Jerry Buscar, Nino Montgomery and Pogpog de Angel. All are residents of Barangay San Fernando on Sinuguran Island, in Caridad. **Benito Barges Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau**

Lightning kills boy

CEBU CITY—A 13-year-old boy was killed while his two younger brothers were wounded after they were struck by lightning on Wednesday. The fatality was identified as Ignino Eding, of Barangay Canasojan in Talisay town, about 10 km north of Cebu City. His younger brothers—Junel, 11 and Ruffet, 10 months old—were confined at the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu City. Cabinet did not suffer any burns because he was tightly embraced by Ignino when the lightning struck their house, according to their aunt Rosalinda Ming-Ming Abing, who was attending to the relatives at the hospital. said the brothers were playing in the backyard when the lightning struck them. **Jeanne Aquinaran, PDI Visayas Bureau**

Suspected fixer slain

DAET, CAMARINES NORTE, Luzon—Two motorcycle-riding men shot dead a suspected fixer at the Land Transportation Office (LTO) in front of the Lyceum University in Barangay City on Wednesday. Supt. Nilo Arce, Batangas City police chief, identified the victim as Vic Rommel Jayson Tolentino, 23, a resident of Sitio Bagong Kumunidad, Barangay Kumintang Ibaba, Batangas City. Arce said the victim was walking toward the LTO office at about 11 a.m. when the suspects suddenly approached and shot him before escaping toward the city proper. Arce said they are looking into the possibility that the killing was related to the victim's allegedly as a fixer at the Region IV office. **Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

Indons arrested

DAVAO CITY—Government security forces in Campostela Valley arrested at least nine Indonesian sailors after the company they work for reported that they hijacked the vessel they were manning. Doctor Supt. Benito Dumlao, Compostela Valley police director, said in April, 71 illicit days reported that its tugboat, 10 like this. Dino was commandeered by its crew and was suspected to be in Philippine waters. Dumlao said they have been on alert for the tugboat and finally intercepted it in Mayo town on Sunday morning. Indonesian Consul Bambang Sunawan said the Indons that the tugboat sailed from North Sumatra and was supposed to be heading for South Kalimantan. "They were supposed to return (to) South Kalimantan on April 24 but they didn't arrive," Sunawan said. Dumlao said the suspects were brought to the regional police headquarters for investigation. **Edwin Jay Garlos, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

Piggery burns

LEGAZPI CITY—At least 100 pigs were killed roasted or burned like when a piggery at Barangay Sto Nino here caught fire on Tuesday. The city fire department placed the damage at P400,000. Observers believed the blaze was intentionally carried out since the piggery owned by a certain Manuel Mabuna had long been complained of for its foul odor. Even residents feared on the roasted pigs that the owner doused with the allegers. **Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

Motorcycle seats ripped up

LEGAZPI CITY—Still looking for a solution to the series of arson-related fires in this convention city, motorcycle-public service drivers are facing a new annoying set by unidentified makers. The upholstered seats of at least five motorcycles parked at the Provincial Disaster Operations Center (pdoc) were slashed by pranksters on Monday. Two days before, a motorcycle jacket at the parking lot of city mall suffered similar damage. The concerned have been admonished, according to city police chief Supt. Ramiro Guarino, but antiarson are needed to join the volunteers. City officials urged owners of malls and buildings to tighten security. **Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

38 Pinoys jailed for strike in Saudi back home

RIADH (AFP)—THIRTYEIGHT overseas Filipino workers who staged a strike against their Saudi Arabia employers have arrived home after being detained for four months in Riyadh.

They were released on May 6 after their Manila-based recruitment agency paid 121,000 Saudi riyal (about P1,880,000) in their employers' behalf, the Philippine Embassy.

Illness of them came from the Visayas, Metro Manila, Pampanga, La Union, Isabela, Benguet and Baguio City.

The detained for a return pay man made by Amsaban when the Philippine labor attache' mediated for the workers' release, according to Khalid Tagaba, one of the returning workers.

In January, 53 of them workers staged a strike when they protested their employer's alleged failure to pay salaries and breach of job contracts.

The workers were detained at the rooftop of a government building in Riyadh. The following month, the rest of the workers also staged a strike and were detained on the first floor of the same building.

The workers accused their employer of violating their job contracts. They applied as janitors but were made to work as caregivers at a mental hospital in Riyadh, they said.

They also complained of illegal pay deductions, nonpayment of overtime pay and lack of food.

"It was all pain and suffering when we arrived in the hospital. We thought we were going to work as janitors, but when we arrived there ... we were made to work as caregivers," Tagaba said in a forum here on Thursday.

"I was deafened and I said 'God, what is happening to us? We just came there to work as janitors.' It was so hard for us because the patients tended to hurt us physically. They would hit our faces and heads," she said.

Regina Gam-ao, 23, of Isabela, Mt. Province, said they experienced lack of food while detained by their employer. Other Filipino workers in Riyadh detained food when they learned about their plight.

Nora Soliman, chair of Migrante-Cordillera, said the OFWs were victims of contract substitution.

"They were forced to sign the contract which was written in Arabic and which was not translated to them. As promised by their recruiter, these workers were to have free food, accommodation, free medical and dental expenses and a day holiday in a week. But none of these was fulfilled. The worst thing was that they were not paid their salaries on time thus depriving them of money to buy their own food." Desiree Caduaas, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Bacolod bishop declares war on signature drive

By Carla P Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—THE DIOCESE of Bacolod, led by Bishop Vicente Navarra, launched a sustained protest drive against what it called a "false people's initiative" for Charter change.

Priests and parishioners, during the religious masses, started distributing red "Reject the fake people's initiative," "Oppose the extension of terms of politicians," and "Uphold pro-Filipino, pro-country laws."

The rally would be followed by a massive information dissemination campaign against Cha-cha in the parishes and by a summon from various parts of the Diocese of Bacolod to militants with a massive rally at the public plaza on June 12, said Fr Antonio Pontillo, social action director of the diocese.

Navarra, in a statement issued during the launching, said this was not the time to change the Constitution because the growth rate would not be ensured.

"The move to change the 1987 Constitution now poses a grave danger to our nation and if we do not oppose it we will become part of this wrong that it will create," Navarra said.

Even if the 1987 Constitution has its defects, it is the offspring of the "people power" revolution where the people regained power from Ferdinand Marcos, he said.

Navarra also pointed out that despite a Supreme Court ruling that an enabling law was necessary for a people's initiative for Charter change, the administration still undertook the "shortcut" move.

He also said many of those signing the people's initiative for Charter change did not totally understand what it was about.

"We are opposing Charter change not because of the shortcomings in which it is being carried out through a people's initiative. It will allow less those already in power to remain there, and it will remove the pre-Martial law provisions of the 1987 Constitution," Navarra said.

The Cha-cha endorsed by the administration would take the power away from the people and prolong the stay in power of those already there with the planned removal of the limits on terms of office, Navarra said.

Navarra said that those in government should instead have the political will to implement the pro-Filipino, pro-country provisions of the Constitution.

"Filipinos of the government should control the wealth of the nation and foreigners should only infuse the process of the capital in business ventures," he said.

"Farmers of the world feed the nation must in its the good of all like agrarian reform. Education should be made affordable to all and the largest share of the budget should go to education, and nationalism and patriotism should be instilled in our students," he added.

FIRST LESSON
Elementary students help clean their classroom in preparation for the opening of classes next month at the Jaro 1 Elementary School in Iloilo City.

Marcos money benefitted Cordillera through agri

BAGUIO CITY—JAR OF THE MONEY TIME On government had recovered from the Ilocos records of the late President Ferdinand Marcos had funded programs for land reform beneficiaries in the Cordillera, an official of the Department of Agrarian Reform said.

"Here in the Cordillera, the flow of money from the Marcos wealth never stopped. The money went immediately to the agrarian reform fund," Renaya Nuwera, DAR Cordillera director said in a Forum here on Wednesday.

Nuwera said from January 2001 until April this year, a total of 46 projects were implemented through funds drawn from the recovered Marcos funds.

He said at least P30.95 million had been used in fund projects such as farm to market roads and post-harvest facilities.

The DAR, he said, has been waiting for the release of another P51 million to implement 33 projects this year.

He said the funds' release was the response to proposals submitted by local government units to DAR in 2004.

Nuwera said former Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan, in 2005, had issued a directive to DAR's regional offices asking them to submit agrarian reform-related project proposals funded by coco levy funds.

Pagdanganan, in past reports, said the government had allotted P50 billion for agrarian reform-related projects such as the construction of farm to market roads, agrarian credits, land payment and school buildings in remote villages.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman, in an interview here last month, denied reports that the recovered Marcos funds were inappropriately used.

Nuwera said the biggest chunk of funds for agrarian reform projects in the Cordillera still came from foreign funding agencies.

He said foreign funding agencies had given the regional DAR P120.17-million for the construction of farm to market roads, post-harvest facilities and water systems.

Julie Cheale, division chief of the support services of DAR Cordillera, said the DAR has used part of the Marcos funds as counterpart for foreign-assisted projects.

Nuwera said the DAR is implementing the third phase of the agrarian reform infrastructure support project under the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

Nuwera said DAR is also set to distribute 1,500 hectares of farmlands to agrarian reform beneficiaries in the region. Last year, 3,000 hectares of farmlands were distributed to 2,711 beneficiaries, he said. Desirie Cuizon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Davao-based cult leader says he's not afraid of controversial movie

DAVAO CITY—CULT LEADER APOLLO QUIBOLOY has endorsed the movie adaptation of Dan Brown's controversial book "The Da Vinci Code," saying he was confident it would not shake his followers' faith.

Quiboloy, who has described himself as the "Son of God," said he would not stop his followers if they want to see the film.

Quiboloy founded the Davao-based Christian movement Kingdom of Jesus Christ. He leads a show every noon, which operates a satellite television station and several radio stations. The group has membership all over the world.

"Let it come. I am sure that my people's faith will not be shaken even on this. My faith is solid, my people's faith in God is solid. Let it come," he said over his regular program on ACQ-ABS, his group's flagship satellite TV station.

Quiboloy's endorsement came in the wake of efforts by some Christian groups to have the film banned in the country.

Even the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), known for opposing a conservative form of Islamic practice, had called for the banning of the film saying it is "very religious."

The Palace also seemed to have taken the position of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who considers the movie blasphemous and that it should not be shown in Philippine theaters.

Ermita even issued an unsolicited advice to the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) to exercise prudence by not allowing the screening of the film.

The MTRCB approved the films showing and gave it an R-13 rating.

Quiboloy replied at those who opposed the showing of the film and accused them of having weak faith and being "religiously insecure."

"Those who are against the film, why show that they are so so sure that their faith. They are not confident about it that they think it will be destroyed by this film. This only goes to show, too, that many of the Philippines is a Christian country, the faith of the people is not that [tight] yet," Quiboloy said.

In the movie, Jesus married Mary Magdalene, a union that allegedly angered the early Muslims.

It also showed how Opus Dei, a conservative Christian group, tried to keep the secret for so long.

But Quiboloy said he does not care if the marriage was real. Jeffrey Tupas, PDI-AU Bureau

Waves threaten 500 Ilocos families

LAOAG CITY—BIG WAVES INDUCED BY winds brought about by tropical storm Caloy on Wednesday forced nearly 500 families in the coastal towns of Pagudpud and Pasuquin to seek safe grounds.

At least 75 families in Pagudpud and 385 families in Barangay Isang near the coast moved to higher grounds when high waves began swamping their homes.

The weather disturbance in the Luzon International Airport said Ilocos Norte had experienced unusually strong winds since Wednesday that were spawned by Caloy.

Cynthia Iglesias, the station's chief meteorologist, advised residents in the coastal villages to stay in safer grounds while wind blows were unusually strong because, she said, high waves could still be generated by this weather condition.

The sources said strong winds had produced waves as high as five meters and a high tide of nine meters.

Big waves also struck some coastal villages in Ilocos Sur on May 15.

"We are looking at similar conditions [in] Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte. This condition may still persist because winds are unusually strong and landing for long hours," Iglesias said.

"When strong wind blows combine with the high tide, accordingly it caused by high waves piles up at the shoreline and cannot immediately retreat back to the sea," she said.

Several residents from the provincial government urbe brought relief goods to Pasuquin on Wednesday noted that seawater had even flood the town's streets.

Pasuquin and Pagudpud are exposed to the South China Sea and are nearest to Caloy's path, weathermen said. Cristina Arnaldo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

NBI probes politicians, leftists behind fish scare

LUSAD CITY—THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF Investigation said it would look into the source of a hoax that caused a fish scare in Sursogon and loss of income for the country's fishermen and demanded if politicians and leftist organizations should be held accountable for it.

Lawyer Tomas Enrile, head of the NBI Bicol regional office, said it was possible that some politicians and militant groups were behind the fish scare that prompted fishermen of Sorsogon province and in Naga, Albay, city of Lahuyan Philippines No. 1 LPE milling operations.

Enrile said members of the Sanggunian Panlalawigan of Albay (SPA) in its session last week that his team was taking the issue seriously. If there was indeed a hoax, its (NBI) findings would have implications on national security, he said.

The SPA sought the investigation after reports of cyanide and mercury contamination triggered the fish scare in Sorsogon.

Enrile said the bureau was now considering the identities of the groups that submitted separate fish samples for testing and used the results to scare the people from eating fish.

"There seems to be a deliberate effort to get bad results that was used to scare the public," Enrile said.

Initial NBI findings showed the fish samples were transported on a Philippine bus and brought to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Manila for analysis.

The BFAR conducted tests on the samples not released its findings, which never them used by unknown groups to embarrass then Lahuyan's mining project caused the unnecessary panic of setes and left in the transactions of Sorsogon.

About 5,000 fishermen suffered losses as a result of the fish scare.

The studies done later by the BFAR and then by the UP Marine Science Research Institute showed that the fish and seaweeds in the Sorsogon waters within tolerable levels and fit for human consumption.

Albay and Sorsogon Bureau Head director Reynaldo Jean said the Multi-Tripartite Monitoring Committee was finalizing its report on to be submitted to Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzales, the report confirmed that the waters in Albay Gulf and Sorsogon were now free from chemical contamination.

For her, Tesgad Salduaan took up the cudgels for the fishermen by filing court charges against Lahuyan.

At the May 9 session of the SPA, Board Member Jose Sarmiento, committee on environment chair, moved for favorable endorsement of the ruling of Lahuyan's mining operations.

Other members of the council, however, said Enrile was already a prejudged mining person created to work for the Rapa Nagsa Bay Finding Commission's report before the ASA acts on the matter seemed.

Edgar Alejo, PDI Contributor Lucen Bureau

SAFETY DRILL
A man in evacuee joins a massive drill, the first ever in the country, in Sto. Domingo, Albay. The drill was the first to be held to test a tsunami warning system in the Pacific Ocean that has been in place for years but was never tested.

Doc quits amid probe of drug overprice

(MAO (TF)—A fertility health specialist in Compostela Valley province resigned amid allegation he was involved in the corrupting of medicines the provincial government bought in 2004.

The specialist was being investigated by the Sanggunian Panlalawigan.

But Dr. Jose Eulalio Dajoli, Bantayanon Hospital Chief, said his resignation has nothing to do with the allegations.

"I just feel it's about time that I should devote my full time to private practice," Dajoli said.

Dajoli, along with Gov. Jose Caballero, provincial administrator Antonio Bayarri and provincial budget officer Joel Bolos, he were being accused of putting up the overprice of the 2004 medicine just claim for the hospital by as much as 1,000 percent.

Caballero has denied any wrongdoing saying he signed the purchase order because it was his duty and that he believed it was in order.

Caballero said the local audit office has not requested his presence and had cleared him of any wrongdoing.

In a statement issued to the media, the Commission on Audit based in Tabaconon, Compostela Valley, said "the purchase request is valid and order" and "that the purchase order to San Mateo was found to have substantially complied with all the rules and regulations."

The COA also said the prices offered to the purchase order were the prices found in the bid tender of San Mateo Laboratories Corp, "the low amount, pricing and responsive bidder determined by the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)."

It also said that the purchase of various drugs and medicines by San Mateo which amounted to more than P687,000.00 was "made in accordance with the procedures of R.A. 9184."

But the Sanggunian Panlalawigan (SP) despite the low "official receipt" officials would be charged in the December 2004 Mercedes and Donna Ap Santos with a report from Jonah Jacilla, PDI Mindoro Bureau

Journalist to sue dad for attack in San Pablo

MILITANT groups join protests against attacks on journalists.

GUAMBA CITY—A MEMBER OF the San Pablo City council is in hot water after he physically assaulted a host of a local TV program and columnist of a weekly tabloid while the council was in session on Tuesday.

Councilor Edgardo Adajar was caught on video while he was attacking journalist Jong Manzano. Just outside the session hall at the night floor of the new city hall building at about 11:30 a.m.

Manzano hosts "Kapol, Walang Tabloid" program on Channel 17 of the local cable network in San Pablo and writes a column for the weekly tabloid "Bantaola Balita."

He was an ardent critic of alleged anomalies in the city government which he claims to be administrative and criminal charges at the Ombudsman against Adajar and 12 others, including Mayor Vicente Amante, the Mayor Loreto Vidal and several other City councilors, last year.

The year anonymous letters group proposed highly irregular land deal which, he said, and the local government millions of pesos.

Speaking with the Inquirer over his mobile phone, Manzano said he felt humiliated and degraded by the attack.

According to his account, he was with fellow journalist Emelie Bermudez and was supposed to cover the regular session of the city council today. They were barred from entering the session hall by city hall employees.

He said moments later, an angry Adajar went out of the session hall and charged at him while shouting profanities.

"Adajar was furious. He was trying to drag me inside the session hall," Manzano said.

He said Adajar cursed him and went placed his arm around his neck as the councilor dragged him inside the session hall. "Then he kicked me."

The harassed could not defend as much Adajar to get his reaction.

Manzano, a member of the Legislative chapter of the National Union of Journalist of the Philippines (NUJP), said the incident was witnessed by about 100 people, including other San Pablo-based journalists.

He said a source of Adajar was also cursing him while the councilor was beating him up.

He said he must not to fight back "because he was at other's office."

"I said to myself that I will not stoop down to his level," Manzano said.

Adajar only stopped when a policeman intervened, Manzano said.

After the attack, Manzano went to the local police station and reported the attack. Marites Ramos, PDI bystander to Lucen Bureau

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PRESERVE THE LA MESA WATERSHED!

We the undersigned, acting for and in behalf of the 12 million inhabitants of Metro Manila, and representing various organizations concerned with a sustainable future for the next generations of Filipinos yet unborn, hereby come together and declare that:

- We uphold the right of Filipino households in Metropolitan Manila to have unimpeded access to clean drinking water.
- We strongly advocate the protection and preservation of the La Mesa Reservoir, as one of the largest alternative water sources of Metro Manila.
- We strongly oppose the privatization of the 99- hectare portion of the La Mesa Reservation Area, for the purpose of establishing housing units therein, on the basis of a 2004 scientific and technical findings of the National Hydraulic Research Center UP College of Engineering, which recommended that " It would be in the best interest of the MWSS and the General Public who eventually utilize from drinking the water in the La Mesa Reservoir that the 99- hectaresof the La Mesa Watershed area being proposed for the MWSS Housing Project REMAIN A PROTECTED WATERSHED AREA AND NOT BE CONVERTED TO A HOUSING PROJECT AREA".
- We strongly object to the endangerment of the largest remaining forest of its size in Metro Manila located adjacent to a vital water resource combined with the water from Angat and IPO Dams, considered to be among the top three of the largest sources of drinking water in Southeast Asia;
- We seek to uphold the integrity of the water supply of Metro Manila which is in clear and imminent danger of contamination if the MWSS employee housing development is established in the planned site;
- We call on all residents of Metro Manila to join us in asserting our right to clean water and healthy environment, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines;
- The preservation of the Metro Manila's largest remaining forest located at the La Mesa Watershed and the protection of a critical source of drinking water for 12 million inhabitants of Metro Manila is our responsibility;
- We call on the government and the MWSS management to exhaust all means to put an end to the 38-year plight of deserving awardees/claimants of the 99-hectare land and provide a viable location for the housing project, without prejudicing the inalienable rights of millions of residents of Metro Manila to clean water and livable environment.

We urge the Government to declare the La Mesa Watershed a Protected area!

Proposed MWSS Housing Project at the La Mesa Watershed

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Quezon City

Nanette Castelo Daza
District IV, Quezon City

Renato Diaz
Presidential Assistant for Central Luzon

Wowingkhot Sycip
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Bantay Kalikasan

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Lawrence Guillen
Film Director

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Sen. Jamby Madrigal
Phil. Senate

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All City Management Co.

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Rotary Club of MAKATI DI 3830

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Asian Institute of Management

For more info on the Save the La Mesa Coalition, call +63 (2) 925-3333 or +63 (2) 415-2227 or visit www.lamesaecopark.com & you can download signature forms from the website.

Second Filipino conquers Everest

Story on page A1

schoolmarch of climbers along the trail, Ermita was not held up by "traffic."

Also, Sebastian said, by the time Ermita began the final leg of his climb, the fixed rope lines from Camp 4 to the summit had been put in place. In Oranteo's case, he had to wait for Sherpas to set up the lines.

Not complete without Gardiner

In a phone patch interview with reporters at the National Sports Coffee in Greenhills, Makati, Ermita called for support by another Filipino climber, Ito ni Gardiner, who is also attempting to scale Everest. (See story on this page.)

"The Philippine expedition to Everest in 2006 will not be complete if Boyet will not make it to the summit and back safely," said Golden, a former transportation undersecretary.

Golden also said that as a former president of the Mountaineering Federation of the Philippines Inc., he was "looking forward" to the ascents of Gardiner.

"All Filipino mountaineers should be able to accomplish their objectives. We would like Filipinos to be in good voice and confident that Pastor would make it down safely.

And the family members had made plans for Pastor's homecoming. The first thing they will do is attend Mass together, Mary Ann said.

According to Sanggayang, it was agreed that Leo Oracion would be the first to climb Everest in part of the PPMEE strategy.

"If not killed, (Pastor would) still be another one to continue the climb. That was why (Oracion and Ermita) did not climb together," he said.

Red carpet

In Cebu City, the red carpet will be rolled out for Leo Oracion, the first Filipino to reach the peak of Mt. Everest.

Cebu Gov. Gwen Garcia said Oracion would be conferred the Gaddang Eagle award, an annual recognition given by the provincial government to outstanding Filipinos during the province's founding anniversary in August.

"It is a very historical achievement, and more so, it is also a major source of pride for us Cebuanos," the governor said of Leo's feat.

"For one thing, it shows a courageous spirit. It is a testimonial to the indomitable Cebuano spirit," she said.

Although a native of Leyte, Quezon, Leo became a Cebuano by choice when he chose to live in Cebu after marrying a Cebuana, Garcia said.

Mandaue City Mayor Thadeo Ocaña said Leo would be given a hero's welcome upon his return.

A resident of Barangay Cabancalan in Mandaue, Leo will receive a cash incentive apart from the award.

"In behalf of the people of Mandaue, I would like to congratulate Leo. I know he is bringing pride and honor to the country and to the city," Ocaña said, adding:

Happy Ko

"Ako kasi diyan every Filipino what a Mandaueñahan is made of—a strong, determined, and, I like best in a mountain that Mandaue is made for the world."

Another happy and proud person is Leo's 3-year-old daughter Leah Marie Angela, called "Ito" by her family.

"Nalipos ko (I am happy)," the girl told the reporters in a phone interview. "Thank you, Lola, Joy (my mother) for (because you were)."

Leo's sister Lucena, 43, and other family members were bound in a hotel in Manila yesterday to await a phone call from him.

Lucena said the family did not know when Leo could come home, but it was possible he would first go to Lechon before flying to Cebu.

She admitted that the people and officials of Lechon had felt bad because of TV advertisements saying Leo was a Cebuano.

Well, Lucena clarified, the people of Cebu for considering her brother a Cebuano.

Lifeguard and receptionist

Leo went to Cebu in 1993 to follow Lucena, an architect who had moved to the province in 1989—10 years before Leo followed. He lost in a tournament that Mandaue is made for the world."

Leo worked as a lifeguard and receptionist in a computer science graduate, Leo worked at a lifeguard at the Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort and Spa in Lapulapu City, where he met his future wife, Angel, who worked there as a receptionist.

He married Angel, a native of Bulagnen, Cebu, in 2001, according to Lucena.

In 2002, Lowen acquired a seat in Dera Homes in Barangay Cabancik, Mandaue. Leo and his family stayed with Lucena there.

According to Shangri-La's Cebu Manager Ajay Singh was assigned to Amman, Jordan, by the Shangri-La management in February.

Lucena said that after Leo's feat, she and other family members would go to a movie house to stop conquering the world's tallest mountains for his safety.

She said it would be good for him to focus on his own family now.

Leo's promise

In Lechon, Leo's mother Ilderay, 63, said she had never wavered in her belief that her son would

(Continued on page A2)

TRAINING FOR EVEREST: This handout photo of Leo Oracion shows him scaling the vertical wall of Mount Aphrar in New Zealand in March. (REUTERS)

Lawmakers cite Oracion for 'outstanding feat'

REPUBLIC SEC. DEMOCRATS REcited commendations in the Senate and House of Representatives yesterday for conquering Mt. Everest.

Sen. Richard Gordon and Manuel "Manny" Villar Jr. filed separate resolutions hailing Oracion for his "outstanding feat that boosted Filipinos' image abroad."

Gordon and other Filipino mountaineers in his expedition "have done the nation proud and have shown the world the Filipinos' capacity to excel," Villar said.

Gordon and Division and the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition proved "that with hard work and faith in God, Filipinos can make a difference in the world," Gordon said.

"They linked their lives in scaling the heights of the world's highest mountain, symbolizing that we as a people can indeed overcome the greatest of challenges and stand proud among the members of the global community," he said.

House Deputy Minority Leader Rufus Oaminge and his fellow militant lawmakers filed House Resolution No. 1222, lauding their "extraordinary act of courage and an inspiration to the entire country.

"The House should commend Oracion, Ermita and Gardiner who brought honor and pride to the nation through their Mt. Everest feats. They showed virtues of perseverance and patriotism despite insurmountable odds," the resolution said.

"Their example ought to be emulated by every Filipino, especially with the huge national and social problems the nation is facing. We join the people in sustained rejoicing over this clear attempt of the Filipino," it added.

"We likewise have the capacity to overcome problems bigger than Everest. Gracion et al are that great inspiration," he added. *TJ Burgonio and Philip C. Tubeo*

Skeptical Emata pal now looking for 'lechon' money

Story on page A1

would make it. Boy Sanggayang said he now had to keep his end of the agreement he made with the climber on Saturday: "I guess I will be forced to look for money to buy lechon."

"I had told him to just phone the Philippine flag once he got down," said Sanggayang, an original member of the First Philippine Mount Everest Expedition.

But when reports came in that Pastor, also of the PPMEE, had made it, Sanggayang expressed thanks and relief.

He did Pastor's wife, Mary Ann, who said: "We are so happy and excited for his success."

Mary Ann said the family's anxiety was replaced with an equally difficult one knowing that her husband had succeeded in his climb.

Strategy

She pointed out, however, that Pastor still had to make the descent, which was as equally dangerous undertaking. "My fears are not yet over," she said.

Still, she said, the family was

(Continued on page A2)

TRAINING FOR EVEREST: This handout photo of Leo Oracion shows him scaling the vertical wall of Mount Aphrar in New Zealand in March. (REUTERS)

Third Filipino climber on track for 1-2-3 finish

Story on page A1

p.m. He is aware of Oracion and Ermita's achievement and is hoping for the two climbers. It has never been a race for him. That's why he chose to climb in blissful solitude."

Ortuza added that what was most important was the climber's safety.

ONE 7's crew (the, www.gmanews.tv, said Gardiner was "expected to make it to the summit on Friday").

Ortuza quoted Gardiner as saying in Filipino: "I am happy for the success of Leo Oracion and Ermita Ermita. It has never been my intention to engage in a race. I have proceeded according to my plan, and my dream is that my core goal to find us would be dispersed and Filipinos would have a bigger chance [to make it to the peak]."

Rivalry

The expeditions of Gardiner and of Oracion and Ermita had been hyped up as another point of rivalry between the two giant networks, GMA 7 and ABS-CBN.

Apiko (Filipino for a perception or feeling within GMA 7 that the network had "lost" the competition), Ortuza laughed.

"We have never treated this as a competition," Ortuza said, adding that GMA 7 was supportive of Gardiner because it was a sponsor of his climb.

Whoever got to the summit first would be given more for the country at the moment, he added.

Gardiner left for Nepal in March to give himself enough time to acclimatize to the harsh conditions on Everest (29,035 feet or 8,850 meters).

Not commercial climb

He climbed Tibet's Mt. Cho-Oyu (26,906 feet) in September 2005. On Jan. 1 of this year, he became the first Filipino to climb Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina, at 23,035 feet the highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere.

Oracion and Ermita's mountainous climb was part of the preparation of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition (FPMEE), which plans to scale the mountain next year.

Dutch Sebastian, who started forming the team with then Sanggayang, the Undersecretary Art Valdez in 2004, said the idea to climb Everest came up in 2000.

At that time, he said, the team organizers had two choices, the route of which was to take the "commercial climb."

Mountaineers with experience in high-altitude ascents have the option of paying $70,000 each to climb professionals in Nepal for a guided climb of Everest.

It is a route that climbs, ropes, clips and other equipment needed to reach the summit would be set up, and all the mountaineer would have to do is just "clip on and tour the ropes."

"In other words, it's spoonfed," said Sebastian, previous president of the Federation of Philippine Mountaineers Association.

Later, in a televised roundtable discussion on the maintenance of overseas Filipino workers, she again made mention of the singular achievement.

"The conquest of the world's highest peak is a clash of Filipino excellence, perseverance and courage in hoisting the hard task of nation-building," Ms Arroyo said.

She took the occasion to declare that she was "committed in a vision that will not falter in the face of adversity," and that "the entire government" was "this Malacañang Arroyo notes took time out from work to congratulate Oracion and Ermita.

"[The entire nation also shares the joy and pride of the (FPMEE) led by Leo Oracion on their achievement. Even as we speak, we also heard news of the outstanding feat of another Filipino, Erwin 'Pastor' Emata," the said.

Mr Arroyo first noted the climbers' feat during a program at the Palace on the latest investiture fund being promoted by the government.

GARDINER: I chose my own pace.

"We didn't want the commercial climb. We wanted an organized set-up," he said.

Training climbs

Sebastian said the team went on its unofficial training climbs of various mountains in preparation for the assault on Everest.

It was agreed that during the training climbs, the team would decide which of its members would be the fittest to scale the world's highest mountain, he said.

The team's area training climb is on Mt. Banahao in Alaska, and to its North America's tallest peak, Sebastian said.

The plan to scale Everest next year involves two teams of eight pushing toward the summit from two sides...one team coming up from Tibet and the other from Nepal.

The teams will set off at the same time and meet at the summit to achieve the goal of a "unity climb," Sebastian said.

Three women are on the team, if they succeed in reaching the summit, they will be the first women from Southeast Asia to do so.

According to Sebastian, Gardiner was invited to be part of the team but negotiations for his entry bogged down.

Sebastian said Gardiner was asked to summit in a training schedule.

But he would not commit to him that he would be the one to scale the summit," Sebastian said without elaboration.

"MURA, MATIBAY, MAGANDA AT GAWA PA NG PILIPINO"
— Mayor Jonathan L. Alfonso
Manila City Mayor

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Da Vinci movie: 'A thriller, not a historical document'

From page A1

Sacred, Langdon must evade shadowy elements of the Church's Opus Dei sect, who want the secret of the grail to remain secret.

The movie is directed by Ron Howard, a record-gleaming filmmaker who won a Best Director Oscar for "A Beautiful Mind." With such talents working on "The Da Vinci Code" in front of and behind the camera, there was some hope that the film would intelligently handle the book's more irreverent aspects.

And so it has. The film Howard made is very faithful to the book, a handsome, gripping adaptation of the bestseller. Scriptwriter Akiva Goldsman does an impressive job retaining the essential points of the novel in the two-and-a-half hour film.

Howard's direction is focused and intelligent, but not flawless. The scenes where Hanks is deciphering codes, showing words lighting up in his mind to catch his attention, are reminiscent of the director's own Oscar winner "A Beautiful Mind," which employed the same technique.

Goose bumps

And a scene where Hanks and Tatou are about to be shot while in a van is confusingly edited, such that the audience is left wondering how they were rescued.

The flashbacks showing the doom of Christianity however, are magnificently filmed, showing sweeping views of magnificent temples and hundreds of extras in exquisite costumes. And the final shot, which shows Hanks at the Louvre, will surely induce goose bumps.

Is Howard's last marvel, his "Da Vinci Code" movie is a thriller, not a historical document. Its objective is to entertain moviegoers, not discredit Church teaching. And yet the Church has blasted the book and movie anyway, calling them blasphemous.

Among the more interesting concepts which didn't make it to the movie are a more detailed discussion of the Sacred Feminine, and the suggestion that Walt Disney himself was obsessed with Mary Magdalene, alluding in fact in his animated movies.

Acting standout

The acting standout is McKellen as the grail expert who articulates the film's most controversial ideas. When he says lines like, "What if the greatest story ever told was a lie?" you can't help but listen.

As the role-deciphered Langdon, Hanks is fine but you can't help but wonder what a better-looking actor would have been like in the role (the book describes Langdon as looking like Harrison Ford).

As the pivotal role of Sophie, Tatou is serviceable but not particularly memorable. The best thing that can be said of her work here is that she shows no trace of the wide-eyed "bimbo," the role in the movie of the same name that made her an international star.

Brown's skills

Why all the fuss over a fictional story? It's because Brown skillfully used real artwork, documents, buildings and people in his book, which has been read by an estimated 75 million people worldwide.

How could readers not think "The Da Vinci Code" was real, considering that Jesus Christ, Leonardo Da Vinci and Isaac Newton are as real as the Mona Lisa painting, the Louvre Museum and the Opus Dei?

It's because of Brown's wonderful interweaves of art, history, and language that readers believe that the theories he presents in his book are real.

Yet, that does look like a woman on the left of Jesus Christ in Da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper. And yes, it does make sense that the Church would want to conceal sexual abuse Christ marrying Mary Magdalene and having a child with her, if such a thing happened.

Will "The Da Vinci Code" cause some Christians to question some of their beliefs? Definitely. Will they abandon their faith because of this movie? If they do, then they couldn't have been very good Catholics to begin with.

HOME IN MYSTICS: Protest from Debt Coalition rally in front of the Mendiola Pantheon to protest the so-called "request" surrendered to the Palace. De Venecia backed code on the Constituent Assembly

No shame in being called GMA lapdog but . . .

From page A1

a new opposition bid to impeach the President.

"I remain loyal to the President for as long as my loyalty jibes with my loyalty to my people. If it does not, I will remain loyal to my people," he said on Wednesday.

That loyalty to the President seemed to be unraveling after Cagas learned that Malacañang was considering removing a provision in the proposed 2006 national budget requiring consultations with district representatives before energy, agricultural and agrarian reform projects were implemented.

Catastrophe

Cagas said during the House plenary session that deleting this provision would be a "catastrophe" for congressmen.

"You better wake up," he said. "Everything that we did in the last budget will go to the mayors and the governors ... I am afraid that my people will exercise me to sign the impeachment if I cannot sing what is going to happen."

Cagas said that during the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council meeting in Malacañang on Monday, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda informed him that the Palace wanted the controversial provision removed.

This means that congressmen would be deprived of largesse from juicy infrastructure projects.

Betrayed

He said he felt "betrayed ... betrayed by this administration ... betrayed by the leadership of this House."

With this development, Cagas said that he would not hesitate in signing the impeachment complaint the opposition said it would refile when the next Congress convenes opens in July.

Last year, administration supporters in the House killed a similar move to unseat the President over allegations the rode the 2004 presidential elections—a charge the has vehemently denied but does not go away.

On Wednesday, opposition House Deputy Minority Leader Ruben Ingeles of Iloilo said the grassfed administration supporters were urging him to refile the impeachment complaint immediately, hoping the move would usher in an early Charter.

CAGAS feeling betrayed.

ESPLICO asked to name names.

Palace promises not kept

Ingeles said cash, projects and appointments to government posts that the Palace reportedly promised in exchange for casting a no vote to the impeachment complaint last year had not materialized and had resulted in so much unhappiness.

Reporting Surigao Rep. Prospero Pichay challenged Ingeles to name names. "We challenge him to put up or shut up."

Even so, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel advised the House opposition not to bother with another impeachment case against Mrs Arroyo.

"You because Gloria is not guilty. She is guilty of practically all violations of the Constitution and she should be impeached," Pimentel said.

"But considering the track record of the House...if we go to an impeachment of impeachment, it will also be an opportunity for selling and buying of votes, so why go through that charade?" With reports from Michael Lim Ubac and Aubet Cabuag-Arevalena

City of Manila bans 'Da Vinci Code'

From page A1

married Mary Magdalene and fathered children whose descendants have survived to the present day but suppressed accusations of blasphemy not only from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines but also from other Christian groups across the globe.

Earlier this week, however, the Manila and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) allowed the film to be shown but gave it an R-18 rating, meaning it is restricted to adults.

According to Historante, cinema owners in Manila who defy the ban face a one-year jail term and a P5,000 fine. Those caught selling pirated DVDs or VCDs of the movie could be jailed for up to six months and fined P5,000, he added.

City's sentiment

"This is the sentiment of the city of Manila," said Councilor Benjamin Asilo, a member of the resolution.

"The film made erroneous and unsubstantiated claims against the fundamental doctrines of Christianity" Asilo said, adding that the people behind the movie "should not be allowed to enrich themselves at the expense of erroneous teachings, religious institutions and impairing our relationship with our God."

Councilor Ma. Asuncion Fugoso (District 3), one of those who opposed the resolution, said she was withholding judgment on the film.

"It's not for me to judge, I know it's just fiction, but why use the name of Christ?" Fugoso said.

Councilor Ora mods opposed the resolution, saying that she was for freedom of expression. She described Brown's book as "storyline" so that "since you may reading it, you'll not get it down."

"If your faith is strong, any movie that depicts Jesus as Satan will not affect you. But if your faith is weak, any movie will not save you," Asilo added.

Councilor Lourdes Isip-Garcia, who also opposed the ban, said the movie "is fiction, just for entertainment."

Not a sin

Fr. Jerome Bruno, director of the Catholic Church's National Office of Media Affairs, said it wasn't a sin to see the movie.

"Siguro, in general, for confidence it's ... [that] the Holy Father has not made it a sin if you watch it," Bruno told the Inquirer on Tuesday.

In France, where the film premiered last a suggestion for people shid by the arty Christian bravery was depicted in the movie. If you think the movie is ill-spirited, don't go see it.

"There's no question that the film is likely to be upsetting to some people," forward and reverence, as the Cannes Film Festival on Wednesday. "My advice, since virtually no one has really seen the movie yet, is to not go see the movie. If you think you're going to be upset. Wait. Talk to somebody who has seen it. Discuss it. And then arrive at an opinion about the movie is not."

Again: This is supposed to be entertainment, it's not devotion," he said.

The movie suggests that Jesus Christ was married to Mary Magdalene and fathered a child. One reporter asked the nun if they believed Christ was married.

She: Yes. Hindi kaya [Well, I wasn't married." With reports from Nikko Dizon and AP

LIVING UP TO ITS PUBLICITY "Da Vinci" opens to the expected long lines at the box office, this one at Rockwell in Makati City, with a lot of thanks to the controversy. EDUARDO CASTRO

THE "DA VINCI" STARS behind and in front of the cameras at the 59th International Film Festival in Cannes, France, on Wednesday: "Da Vinci" opened across the globe on Thursday. From left, producer Brian Grazer, director Ron Howard, actors Tom Hanks and Audrey Tatou and author Dan Brown. AP

Time mag writer placed on government watch list

From page A1

suspicion indicating that a group of military and civilian personalities were planning to "withdraw support" from Mr. Arroyo to jump-start an uprising.

Among those in the supposed meeting were Council of Philippine Affairs convenor Panfilo "Boy" Lacson and Senator Teofisto Guingona III, son of Senate President Pro Tempore Teofisto "Teping" Guingona, now president of the Philippine Olympic Committee and Mr. Arroyo's adviser on fund-raising.

Both Lacson and Guingona have denied the report.

Gloriano's testimony is key to unmasking those behind the failed coup, Gonzalez said. But he expressed fears that the journalist might flee the country rather than answer a summons from the National Bureau of Investigation.

"She won't be arrested, but she must cooperate. We're not asking for anything except for the truth. We just want to talk to her," Gonzalez said in an interview.

According to the Time report, Gloriano witnessed the meeting at Guingona's house, "where plans were being hatched for what one of the ringleaders called a 'withdrawal of support' from President Arroyo."

"More than a dozen middle-level officials and businessmen were at the meeting, which were well past one in the morning," the report said.

3 gov't execs involved

Gonzalez's order to include Gloriano in the 40 watch list came amid a supposed "breakthrough" in the NBI investigation.

Three middle-ranking government officials have been found to be involved in the destabilization try, Gonzalez said. He refused to identify the three officials, but he admitted that they were from the executive branch.

"The NBI report is not complete. We want to know why they were in that meeting. We will file charges against these individuals if I find that there's probable cause," he said.

Yesterday Gonzalez ordered the NBI to step up its investigation. Gloriano's testimony, he said, would help bolster efforts to fill the gaps in its report on the alleged coup attempt in the Oval.

The secretary said Cojuangco was not yet off the hook despite the fact that no charges had been lodged against him by the government.

Gonzalez said he also wanted to know why the group of alleged conspirators would invite an international media member to carrying out their plans to overthrow the Arroyo administration.

"For what purpose? They must be quite certain that the government would fall that night," he said.

Standing by story

The NBI had earlier invited Reyes, Cojuangco and Sindayen for questioning regarding the Time article. Sindayen instead submitted a letter through a lawyer, saying that she was standing by her story.

Reyes and Cojuangco have said on meeting over tuna plate at the latter's house. They claimed, however, that they discussed preparations for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Edsa 1 to be held the following day.

Assassination plot

In the same interview yesterday, Gonzalez disclosed an alleged plan by leftist groups to assassinate him and the President, citing intelligence reports of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) through National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales.

"This is a serious threat. It's (Gonzalez) showed me last week during a NSA meeting in Quezon City. That's why (Interior) General (Arturo) Lomibao provided me with a bullet-proof car. I've been using it since last month. You have to be facetious," he said. Lomibao heads the Philippine National Police.

Gonzalez said the supposed assassination was to take place during Mr Arroyo's State of the Nation Address before Congress in July.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Department Circular No. DC2006-05-006
Adopting Further Amendments to the WESM Rules

NEWS

PHILIPPINE Ambassador to Singapore Belen Fuk-Anota (center) with Edwin Aguilar, husband of Geeni Aguilar, leave the Supreme Court.

Pinay convicted in Singapore chop-chop slay

SINGAPORE—A FILIPINA maid was convicted Thursday of culpable homicide not amounting to murder for the killing of a fellow domestic worker whose head and limbs were found in a smart Singapore shopping area.

Geeni Aguilar, 30, escaped the death penalty for killing and chopping up 23-year-old compatriot Jane La Pardida when her murder charge was reduced due to her mental state.

"In the circumstances, I convict you of the charge you face," said High Court Judge Mr. Subeh.

Sentencing was set for May 31. Aguilar faces possible life imprisonment or a jail term of up to 10 years.

But lead defense lawyer Khalid Nathan argued for a sentence of less than 10 years, citing Aguilar's mental state at the time of the killing and her remorse during the seven months she had been in prison.

"We make our strongest submission to your honor that Geeni certainly does not deserve a life sentence," Nathan told the judge.

No excuse

"She knows that what she did was wrong and that there is no excuse for her misdeeds. However, she is genuinely remorseful for what she has done."

A letter from Jinggat Versoza, the mayor of Aguilar's northern Philippine home town of Tayabas, was observed in court.

The letter appealed on humanitarian grounds for Aguilar to be spared a long prison sentence. It said her two sons in the Philippines were unaware their mother is in prison and think she is still working as a maid.

Aguilar, wearing an orange prison suit, looked somber and tearful as the verdict was read out. Her husband, Edwin, and sister, Joy, were among those in the courtroom along with Philippine Embassy officials and the mayor.

She was arrested hours after the severed head and limbs of La Pardida were found in a sports bag in the upmarket Orchard Road area on Sept. 9. The victim's torso was later discovered at a nature park.

Fight over money

Court documents showed that the two had an argument inside Aguilar's room at her employers' flat over 2,000 Singapore dollars ($1,274.03) she had lent the victim, part of which was borrowed from a loan shark.

It escalated into a fight during which Aguilar covered La Pardida's face with a cushion until she became unconscious. She then strangled her and placed the body inside a luggage bag.

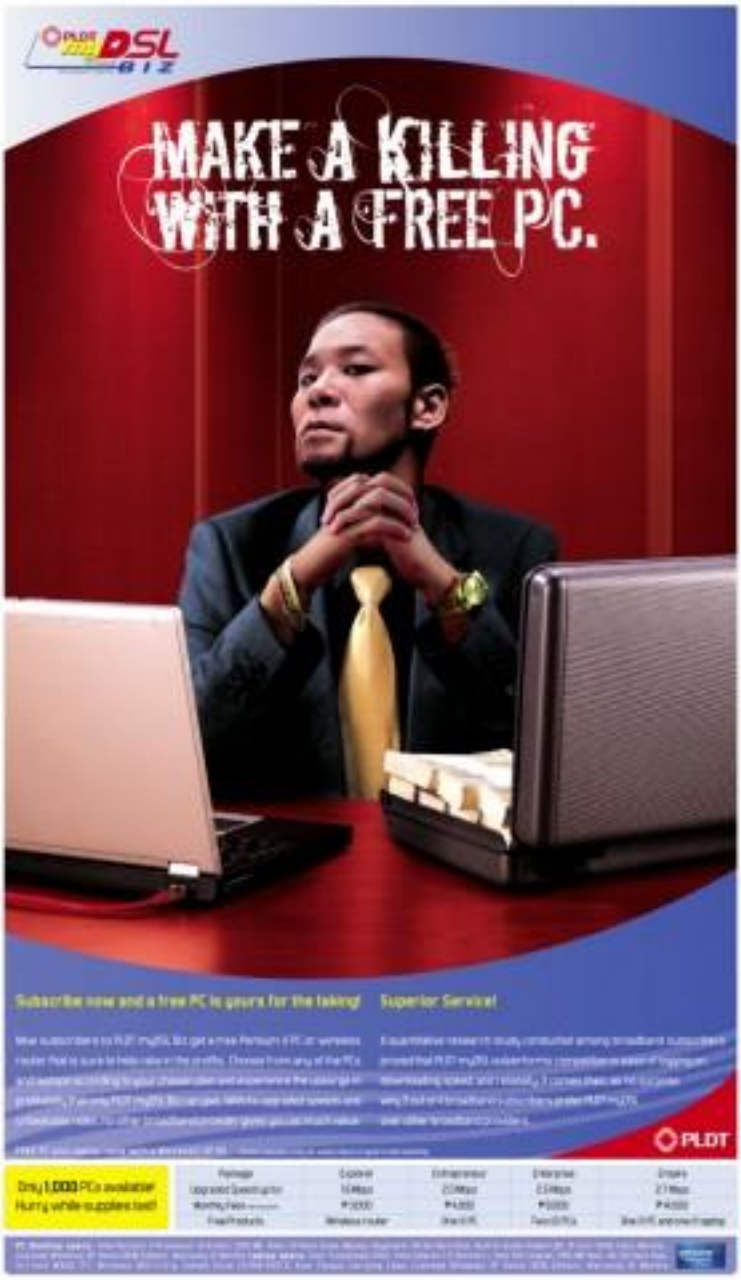
Two days later, on Sept. 9, she bought gloves, a chopper and an axe, cut the body into pieces and made two separate trips on a taxi to dispose of them. Her employers were out while the crime took place.

Consultant psychiatrist Tommy Tan told the court Thursday that Aguilar was suffering from "marked depression" which "substantially impaired her mental responsibility" at the time of the killing.

Tan also said there was a low risk of her reoffending.

In 1995 Filipina maid Flor Contemplacion was hanged for the murder of another maid and a Singaporean boy, stirring ties which have since improved.

More 150,000 women, many of them from impoverished villages in the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, work as maids in Singapore. AFP



Aplus METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil
Tell us your feelings: inquirer.net/name/aplus/message to 2727 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) E-mail: ip_metro@inquirer.com.ph

NCRPO CHIEF Vidal Querol (right) with MPD Chief Pedro Bulaong at Divisoria market to monitor security measures in the area. NIÑO LUCES

SAY GOODBYE to long lines with new electronic payment ticketing scheme for commuters on the MRT and LRT. NIÑO LUCES

A safer Divisoria welcomes shoppers

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE MANILA POLICE DISTRICT (MPD) and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce yesterday launched its "Safe Kita Divisoria" program in an effort to provide shoppers and security to thousands of students shopping for school supplies.

Beginnings

"The program was first introduced in December in time for the holiday rush," MPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong said in a statement.

Support

Bulaong said they have the full support of the Filipino-Chinese community, led by the federation's president Francis Chua, who agreed to be their partners in upholding peace and order in one of the top shopping destinations of Metro Manila.

"Shoppers are again expected to flock to Divisoria before the opening of classes, and we have to be ready to protect them from petty criminals," Bulaong said.

The police chief added, "The Filipino-Chinese community and the Binondo-Ilaya-Juan-Luna are very receptive to the enhanced safety measures."

More men

As part of the improved safety measures, the MPD would deploy additional policemen and "selected" (plainclothes policemen) to prevent the possible emergence of pickpockets and snatchers in the area's markets and malls, Bulaong said.

Assistance center

The MPD official added that the district would also set up a police assistance and information center in the heart of Divisoria to handle complaints from victims of petty crimes.

DOTC eyes E-payment for commuter trains

Tickets may be bought through mobile phone

By Dexter I. Lucas

LONG, INCONVENIENT LINES at the terminals of Metro Manila's commuter rail services may soon be a thing of the past after the transportation department unveiled a plan to adopt electronic payment ticketing schemes.

If adopted, commuters may soon be able to buy tickets on the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) and the Light Rail Transit (LRT) using their mobile phones, Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) Assistant Secretary Roberto R. Custodio said.

The new scheme is one up of an ongoing DOTC project to implement a unified ticketing scheme for Metro Manila's three different commuter rail lines.

"We are working out a system that will allow passengers to purchase tickets through their cell phones," Custodio said. "This system will automatically debit their Smart Cash or G-Cash or their savings accounts so they don't have to wait in long lines when buying tickets."

A similar system is already being used to call authorities in Hong Kong where passengers use cards that can be read by radio signals by simply passing them near the card reader.

The smart cards are to "reloaded" through bank accounts, through the Internet, or with mobile phone payment schemes.

Custodio said the DOTC is "seriously considering" the proposal, adding that it is even better and more efficient than the existing program to unify the ticketing systems being undertaken by the French consultancy Ellis Syrtis.

"The System study is still ongoing and there's no conflict with the payment system," he said.

Calls for a more efficient ticketing system have grown louder as the number of commuters using the MRT and LRT systems increase, prompted in part by rising gas prices.

The trend is especially evident on the MRT's Line 3—known as the Metrowave Express—which traverses the length of Edsa, Metro Manila's main artery.

During the first quarter of 2006, a total of 34.2 million commuters took the MRT-3, data from the company showed. This represents an 11.2-percent increase in the number of riders from the 30.2 million who used the service during the same period last year.

According to the Light Rail Transit Authority, on the other hand, 46.1 million commuters rode its two train lines during the first three months of 2006. This represents an 18.2-percent increase over the 25.8 million passengers that it ferried during the same period last year.

During the morning and evening rush hours, it can take up to 15 minutes for commuters to buy tickets owing to the long lines.

The transportation department has already sealed a deal with the city government of Pasay, Manila, which will donate 48 second-hand trains to the Philippines for the MRT's expansion program.

What's Inside

6 nabbed in marijuana buy-bust raid A27
Suspected carjack gang members charged in QC A26
3 jail guards linked to journalist's slay A26

Baclaran centennial: From fishing village to trading hub

By Dulce F. Gayloy
Contributor

FOR 12 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN days a week, Norma Sandoval, 57, is at her small sidewalk stall on Redemptorist Road, Baclaran, Parañaque City. She sells religious images from Sampaguita, Pasay (Laguna) and Bulacan.

Occupying this spot for the past 20 years, Sandoval, a widow, has been able to send her two children to school with her earnings. Her girl is now married while her son finished commerce, major in computer management.

As president of the Federation of Baclaran Vendors consisting of more than a thousand members, Sandoval says on Wednesdays, the number of vendors in Baclaran can reach as high as 5,000, many of them ambulant. They come from Quezon Province, Batangas, Cavite, Bataan, Marikina, Taytay and Divisoria, and even as far away as Iloilo.

One fourth of this number are Muslims who come from as far as Zamboanga, though many are already staying on Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City. The Muslims have set up their own cooperative, its members also including Christians, to undertake projects to help Barangay Baclaran.

Goods sold include slippers, dresses (local and imported from Korea, Thailand, China), shoes, food and fish.

Regular vendors pay no rent but their space example for when is known as *upahan* or ticket costing P5 a day that goes to the barangay treasury to be spent for projects like keeping the area clean.

"We are not asking for donations from the government," says Sandoval. "We are entrepreneurs in our own simple way. I became a vendor in 1978 (when I arrived from) Bacolod to look for a job here. I used to have a space on the second floor of a building but I may not operate. So, every day, I go up to buy from us. It's saving my permanent kasi mahirap."

She adds that many of their members have prospered and several have children abroad.

Barangay Councilor Florentino "Ato" Cadelifial, says they give private service giving of space to residents of Baclaran. A long-time public servant, spending the past 27 years in the barangay as regional and even barangay officer-in-charge at one time, he says many of the retailers donate to both the Baclaran parish of Sto. Niño de Cocon and the Redemptorist Church.

The so-called underground cemetery of Baclaran, says Cadelifial, has helped advance the development of Baclaran.

This year, Baclaranites are celebrating the centennial of the parish of Baclaran named after its patroness, Sto. Niño de Cocon, the saint of impossible cases, that Baclaran is celebrated until Sunday of May.

Founded in 1906, Sto. Niño de Cocon was the first parish to separate from the centuries old St. Andrew Parish in La Huerta, Parañaque. It is no Quiapo devotion, its area first used to be a cockpit but now transformed into a recreation.

For its 100th anniversary, the parish has chosen the theme "We remember, we celebrate, we believe," to emphasize each function.

Barangay Baclaran's officials led by chair Rolando Cadilles, it has embarked on several projects, including a contest for the most innovative arch made of bamboo. After all, the name Baclaran came from bakilad.

According to folk tales, the area on the shores of Manila Bay used to be a thriving fishing village. Fishermen from the neighboring towns of Bacoor, Imus, Tanza, Binakayan in the province of Cavite, and those from Bulacan, Pateros, Mabolo and Marikina migrated to Baclaran, transforming the area into a bustling fish trade hub.

In the early 1900s, the place was known for its bamboo groves or bawayanan, providing the bamboo for making bakilad or fish traps. Fishermen harvested fish daily and sold them to the nearest market.

Baclaran started calling the place bakilad, or the fishermen's villages." Eventually, the "d" would be replaced by the "r", hence, Baklaran.

Due to its strategic location, Baclaran became a transit point for those coming from Southern and Northern Luzon, a melting pot for commerce, especially bargain hunters. It also attracted religious devotees especially after World War II when the novena to the Perpetual Help at the Redemptorist Church became popular. Novena coordinating the parish church of Sto. Niño de Cocon). The devotion to the Perpetual Help is said to be the biggest Filipino devotion in Asia, attracting people from all over the country. Regular lines of a time of day or night, a visitor to Baclaran will see vendors plying their trade: commuters getting off and on buses, jeepneys, tricycles, make a bustling place that never seems to sleep.

Once an outlet is a priority. Volunteer members of Patrol 117 and Task Force 207 are always visible, making sure petty crimes like cell phone snatching and snatchers do not occur.

From a fisherman's village to a bustling district, Barangay Baclaran has become a principal business area of the city of Parañaque.

STA. ANA de Cocon's feast day is marked on the third Sunday of May. NIÑO LUCES

ENTRANCE arch leading to Sto. Niño de Cocon parish church. NIÑO LUCES

SHOPPING on the side for devotees in the many stalls surrounding the churches of Baclaran. NIÑO LUCES

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
[illegible] Metropolitan Center No. 100
Bonifacio Avenue, [illegible]

SUBJECT: Guidelines in the Issuance of Grant of Franchise and Services of the Philippine Aeronautical and Meteorological Services Administration (PAGASA) Particularly in the Flight Folder Issuance and the Fee Structure Thereof

WHEREAS, the Republic of the Philippines is a signatory to the Convention on International Civil Aviation [illegible] Document No. 7300, otherwise known as the Chicago Convention, to further enhance safety and efficiency of air navigation and to this end the Convention mandates that there be developed in a safe and orderly manner the International Air Transport services may be established on the basis of equality of opportunity and operated soundly and economically;

WHEREAS, the Philippines is a Member country of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and a Contracting State of the Convention thereof, and has designated the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) as the Government of the Republic of the Philippines primarily being charge in pursuing for the provision of meteorological service for international air navigation on its behalf;

WHEREAS, [illegible] Manual on the Navigation Service Economics [illegible] Doc. 9161, [illegible] Policies on Charges for Airports and Air Navigation Services [illegible] Doc. 9082) and WMO Guide to Meteorological Instruments and Methods of Observation [illegible] No. 8);

WHEREAS, pursuant to Executive Order No. 100, it is the goal of this government [illegible] to promote the economic growth of countries to their fullest development potential, and [illegible] to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of said economic growth by making the above objectives of government [illegible] for the state;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 54, Chapter 10, Book IV of Executive Order No. 292 (Administrative Code of 1987), Heads of bureaus, offices or agencies may, upon approval of the Department Head, charge and collect fees for services rendered by the bureau, office or agency concerned;

WHEREFORE, pursuant to the provisions of the paragraphs, the following rules and regulations for the implementation or collection of fees and charges for the [illegible] and services are hereby promulgated:

PART I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Title. These guidelines shall be known and cited as the PAGASA Flight Folder Issuance Fee Structure.

Section 2. Definition of terms and acronyms. Unless defined otherwise, the following terms and acronyms shall refer to the definitions provided hereunder:

a. "PAGASA" refers to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration. It assumes functions of the Department of Science and Technology mandated in Executive Order 462, dated [illegible] including [illegible] and processing [illegible] and issuance of the Flight Folder to the [illegible] customers and industry;

b. "WMO" refers to the Geographical Meteorological Service Office for Aeronautical [illegible] Service Offices) [illegible] and [illegible] Forecasting Systems, [illegible] Regulations [illegible] for the Flight [illegible] Information Folder to be provided; each;

c. "WMO" refers to the World Meteorological Organization. A specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for [illegible] by Nations by promoting [illegible] of weather, climate, water resources management, agriculture and other human activities, among others;

d. "ICAO" refers to the International Civil Aviation Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations established to promote the safe, orderly and efficient development of international civil aviation throughout the world. It sets standards and regulations necessary for aviation safety, security, efficiency and environmental protection and serves as the forum for cooperation among the technical field of aviation, forming of personnel, rules of the air, air traffic control, search and rescue, aircraft [illegible], among others;

e. "ANS" refers to the Aeronautical Meteorological Authority. The authority providing or arranging for the provision of meteorological service for international air navigation on behalf of a contracting country, [illegible] Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

4 nabbed in QC marijuana 'buy-bust' raid

By DJ Yap

MORE THAN 300 KILOS OF MARIJUANA was seized yesterday during a "buy-bust" operation in Quezon City, in what police believe to be a sign that more drug traders are ignoring the illegal herb over shabu, or methamphetamine hydrochloride.

The haul included three bags and a box of marijuana "bricks," or dried leaves wrapped up with packaging tape, which were found inside a rented room at 70 Lovrete St., Bethany Village, Batasan-Quirino Subdivision.

Weighing just short of 114 kilos and worth nearly P456,000, it was the biggest haul yet of "ready-to-distribute" marijuana in Metro Manila this year, according to police.

"It's the first time we came across an operation like this involving marijuana as a finished product. The bricks were all ready for distribution," said Police Director Marcelo Ele of the Directorate of Investigation and Detective Management at Camp Crame.

The operation showed that drug dealers were now shifting their attention from shabu to marijuana, since the police had cut off much of the shabu supply in the country, he added.

Three men and a woman were also arrested in the operation, jointly conducted by the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Follow-up

They were identified as Ilmi Dita, Rosemarie Salilas and Rowalde Reyes, who allegedly received the marijuana from Mountain Province, and Justin Umpad, who purportedly served as the group's "runner."

Ele said the buy-bust operation was a follow-up to two previous operations in Malasiqui, Marikina City, the other day, in which almost two kilos of the illegal substance were recovered.

Acting on information given by a tipster, a DEAC agent posed as a buyer and contacted one of the four, who led the policemen to the house, said CIDG's Inspector Edgardo Bernardo.

The search warrant was necessary since it was a buy-bust operation, subsidiary o crime in progress, he added.

The two-story house was reportedly owned by one Valentina Ilampel, who told police she had been leasing a room on the second floor to the suspects since February, Ele said.

Feud over dog led to killing of man in Las Piñas

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE HOWL OF A BELOVED PET dog could have caused the killing of a man in Las Piñas City on Wednesday.

Police said that three hooded men had lured Alejandro Segura and his girlfriend Reena Asis from inside their house in Las Piñas City on Wednesday night.

Bella Torre was able to identify one of the suspects during the incident and identified him as Elmer Abogado, a neighbor. Bella Torre's nine-year-old daughter, who witnessed the killing, also identified Abogado as one of the attackers, said Insp. Johnlois Soliz, deputy chief of the criminal investigation division.

Soliz said the neighbors had been feuding after Segura's dog was reportedly killed accidentally by Abogado's son last week.

"The two parties fought about it and Abogado had (Ilmi) slander and threat charges against Segura in the barangay hall," Soliz said.

Segura and Dela Torre also filed similar charges against the suspect in the barangay.

Barangay officials referred the case to the police on May 10.

The victim's father, Asiervo, said police that the couple were in their house on Opal Street, Golden Acres in Barangay Talon Uno when the armed suspects forced in at around 9 p.m. on Wednesday.

Segura had multiple gunshot and died on the spot. Bella Torre, who was wounded in the arm, was treated in the Las Piñas Medical Clinic. Asis told the reporter yesterday.

Abogado, who fled after the incident, was arrested in the neighborhood in a follow-up operation conducted by the police, officers said. "The two other suspects remain at large.

Abogado was not armed when arrested but he admitted he owned a gun. He added that the firearm was being repaired in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City.

US eyes negotiating new treaty with N. Korea

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States is considering a new approach to North Korea that would include beginning negotiations on a peace treaty at the same time as six-country talks on dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear programs, the New York Times reported here on Wednesday.

President George W. Bush is very likely to approve the new approach, which had been hotly debated by different factions within the administration, the Times said on its website.

But the change would only happen if North Korea returned to the talks, which have been stalled for months by its refusal to participate.

Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, chief US negotiator with North Korea, was in Singapore on Wednesday, US officials told Reuters. South Korean media reported that he would soon visit their country but that could not be immediately confirmed.

The new thinking about North Korea would coincide with efforts by the United States and other major powers, as the Times put it, to persuade Iran to drop its planned nuclear programs.

Many officials and experts are concerned that Iran draws inspiration from North Korea, which has suffered few international penalties since declaring that it possesses nuclear weapons and will continue to make nuclear fuel.

Although the United States is in some sensible lunch with Pyongyang's income from illicit activities like counterfeiting, China and South Korea have continued and in some instances increased aid and investment in the impoverished North, US officials told Reuters.

North Korea has long demanded a peace treaty to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-1953 Korean war and the administration has said previously it would be willing to consider working on such an agreement.

But the question of when such benefits might flow to Pyongyang has deeply divided the administration.

Many officials favor forcing Beijing the communist regime to Pyongyang would collapse but experts say that is unlikely to happen any time soon.

The administration initially insisted the North dismantle its nuclear programs before receiving any economic or political returns but has softened that position over time. The latest move to offer a multinational peace treaty talks and nuclear negotiations looks to be a further modification.

However, it is unclear whether this new offer will allow Pyongyang's regime, it has refused to return to six-country negotiations on the nuclear issue since an inconclusive session last November.

In recent interviews with Reuters, two senior US officials were very pessimistic about persuading the North to return to the table and said they did not expect any movement until after their leaders office at the earliest.

State department spokesperson Sean McCormack declined to comment on the New York Times report.

But he told Reuters the North still had not made the fundamental decision to abandon its nuclear program and had not agreed on a joint statement on nuclear negotiations.

McCormack noted that a joint statement approved Sept. 19 by the six parties—including the United States, North and South Korea, China, Russia and Japan—foresaw discussion of talks on a broad range of issues, including a new peace treaty, within the context of the disarmament process. Reuters

5 in Indonesia family infected with bird flu

JAKARTA—AT LEAST FIVE MEMBERS OF AN Indonesian family have been infected with bird flu, the World Health Organization confirmed on Wednesday, after the case triggered widespread fears of human-to-human transmission.

There is no immediate evidence the H5N1 flu virus passed easily among at least seven members of the family in North Sumatra province. But experts said nothing could be ruled out and more testing was crucial.

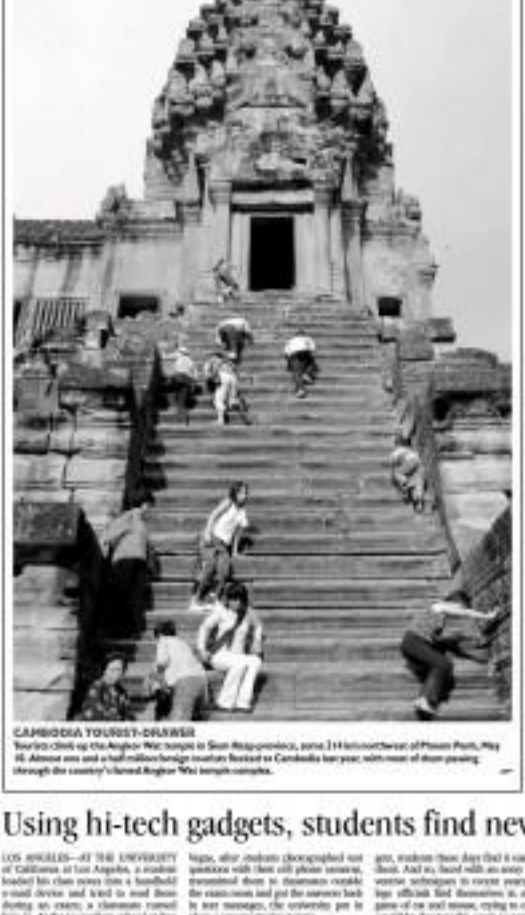
In a day of last-minute events, the WHO also said a cancer from Surabaya city in East Java had died of bird flu, while Indonesia's health ministry announced yesterday that a 1.2-year-old boy from Jakarta who died four days ago was infected with H5N1. Both cases are separate from the human-to-case.

Clusters of human infections are worrying because they indicate that the virus might be mutating into a form that is easily transmissible among humans. That, experts say, could spark a pandemic in which millions might die.

For the moment, the virus is mainly a disease in birds and is hard for humans to catch.

In Djibouti, which has confirmed the first human case to sub-Saharan Africa after a 3-year-old girl tested positive for H5N1, slaughtering of poultry was halted after angry villagers refused to cooperate unless they received immediate compensation.

Officials hoped to re-start culling domestic chickens to contain the virus as soon as possible. The impoverished nation in the Horn of Africa has appealed for international help to fight the disease. Reuters



CAMBODIA TOURIST-DRAWER
Tourists climb up the Angkor Wat temple in Siem Reap province, some 314 km northwest of Phnom Penh, May 18. Almost one and a half million foreign tourists flocked to Cambodia last year, with most of them passing through the country's famed Angkor Wat temple complex. —

'Chanchu' batters China, kills 9 people

SHANGHAI—A TYPHOON SLAMMED INTO south China on Thursday killing eight people and forcing the evacuation of more than 900,000, Xinhua news agency said, while Vietnam was searching for 90 fishermen missing at sea.

Typhoon "Chanchu" ("Calyx" in the Philippines), packing heavy rain and winds up to 170 kph (106 mph), made landfall between the cities of Shantou and Xiamen in the early morning, the Hong Kong Observatory said.

China's coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian caught the full brunt of the storm.

Eight people were killed in Shantou, where Chanchu, the strongest typhoon on record to enter the South China Sea in May, triggered house collapses and landslides, Xinhua said.

Two children were among the dead, the state reported, quoting local government sources.

Almost all roads in Shantou were flooded and there were several blackouts, Xinhua said, adding downpours in Fujian had led to flooding in a number of towns.

Some television news said Chanchu had been downgraded to a tropical storm and was moving northeast at a speed of up to 25 kph but it would still bring strong rainfall to China's eastern provinces, including financial hub Shanghai.

Vietnam's National Search and Rescue Center, in a bulletin carried by the Voice of Vietnam radio station, said 90 fishermen aboard 11 ships last made radio contact on Wednesday morning some 160 nautical miles (300 km) south of Hainan island, close to the storm's path.

Nguyen Quoc Tu, a senior official at the center, said the coast guard and navy were leading a rescue mission, and officials had contacted authorities in China and Hong Kong for help.

"Because the typhoon is still very strong at the moment, it will take time for rescue crews to locate and approach the missing ships," Tu told Reuters.

Typhoons showing strength from storm season, now into China from the south China Sea every year between May and September, losing power once they make landfall.

Xinhua said more than 900,000 people in Guangdong and Fujian had been evacuated in the path of Chanchu, which killed at least 27 people when it swept through the Philippines at the weekend.

The eye of the storm crossed the Chinese coast halfway between Hong Kong and Taiwan, both often the victims of direct hits.

An ace-carrying Belgian ship with eight crew members was stranded offshore and a Chinese rescue vessel was dispatched to reach it on Thursday, state television said. Reuters

China bans risky breast enlarger gel

BEIJING—A GEL USED FOR BREAST IMplargement in China has been banned after hundreds of women injected with the fluid reported suffering serious pain and other health problems, state media said Thursday.

The State Food and Drug Administration last month banned the use of hydrophilic polyacrylamide gel, known in China as Ao Mi Ding, the China Daily newspaper reported.

"It continuously caused negative effects ... and the administration's monitoring center believes its safety cannot be guaranteed," the paper quoted an unnamed spokesman briefly as saying.

More than 300,000 Chinese women have been injected with the so-called "magic liquid" in the past five years, estimated Qiao Qun, director of plastic surgery at Peking Union hospital.

Qun said around than 100 women come to her hospital every year to request to have the liquid removed after suffering from aches and pains.

"Many are in such agony that they can hardly sleep and some have had the harrowing experience of having their breasts removed in non-front lines," the report said.

The gel is made by Chengdu Tianfu Fu Hua Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd. in the southwestern province of Sichuan, cannot be completely removed and will forever threaten the health of the women concerned, it said. AFP

Using hi-tech gadgets, students find new ways to cheat

LOS ANGELES—AT THE UNIVERSITY of California at Los Angeles, a student loaded his class notes into a handheld e-mail device and kept it near them during an exam; a classmate turned him in. At the journalism school at Ionia State University, students tried to use spell check on their laptops when part of the exam was designed to test their ability to spell.

And at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, after students photographed test questions with their cell phone cameras, transmitted them to classmates outside the exam room and got the answers back in text messages, the university put in place a new proctoring system.

"If they'd opted to attack crime wording," said one exasperated Ron Yeblin, dean of the College of Sciences at UNLV. "They'd call for A students."

With their arsenal of electronic gadgets, students these days find it easier to cheat. And so, faced with an array of increasing techniques in recent years, college officials find themselves in a new game of cat and mouse, trying to outwit several hi-tech devices that can transmit with a range of strategies—ranging off Internet access from laptops, demanding the surrender of cell phones before tests or simply requiring that exams be taken the old-fashioned way, with pen and paper.

"It's kind of a battle," said Ryan M. Digennaro, 22, who just finished his third year at Sussex College at Pepperdine University, and has had to take his exams on paper.

"My handwriting is so bad," he said. "Whenever I find myself having to write for a while, I freak out. I feel my hand's going to move, and I can't write as quickly."

Some students said they thought those using these days were more a product of the mind-set, not the tools at hand. AST

Stunning gene comparison suggests ancestors of humans, chimpanzees may have interbred

By Nicholas Wade

THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE HUMAN and chimpanzee lineages, which fossil experts base on human evidence, may have occurred millions of years later than fossil bones suggest, and the break may not have been as clean as humans might like.

A new comparison of the human and chimp genomes suggests that after the two lineages separated, they may have begun interbreeding.

The analysis, by David Reich, Nick Patterson and colleagues at the Broad Institute in Cambridge, Mass., sets up a serious conflict between the date of the split as indicated by fossil skulls, about 7 million years ago, and the more recent date implied by genetic analysis, as late as 5.4 million years ago.

The conflict can be resolved, Reich's team suggests in an article published in Thursday's issue of Nature, if there were in fact two splits between the human and chimp lineages, with the first being followed by interbreeding between the two populations and then a second split.

The suggestion of a hybridization has sparked considerable skepticism, even among the new genetic data seemingly.

Hybrid populations often go extinct because the males are sterile, finds paternal cue, so hybrid females may have mated with male chimps to produce viable offspring. The human lineage finally re-emerged from this hybrid population, Reich suggests, replacing the younger genetic form, while the very early fossils with human-like features may come from the earlier period before the hybridization.

The Reich team's study is a detailed analysis of the human and chimp genomes, and also draws on DNA sequences from the gorilla, orangutan and macaque to tease out ambiguities. They calculate that the human and chimp lines must have split completely apart in the earliest 6.3 million years ago and more probably 5.4 million years ago.

But besides averaging genome-wide differences in DNA to get an overall fix on when the two species split apart, they have also been able to scroll along the genome and estimate the relative age of each small section.

One finding is that the X chromosomes of humans and chimps appear to have diverged about 1.2 million years more recently than the other chromosomes. Females have two X chromosomes, males one X and one Y chromosome.

One explanation for this, Reich's team says, is that there was a hybridization between the sexually separated chimp and human lineages. AFP

AM ORANGUTAN plays with a football at an amusement park in Seoul, May 18. —

The WORLD

HEAT rises from the road along the international border separating Sierra Blanca, Ariz., from San Luis, Sonora, Mexico, May 17 as Border Patrol agents keep a tight watch in the US' busiest immigrant-smuggling hotspot. AFP

A shot at citizenship for US illegals

Senate backs fence along border, citizenship for illegals with 2-year stay

WASHINGTON—THE SENATE AGREED TO GIVE millions of illegal immigrants a shot at US citizenship and backed construction of 370 miles of triple-layered fencing along the Mexican border, but prospects that legislation will clear Congress were clouded by a withering attack against President George W. Bush by a prominent Republican.

"Regardless of what the president says, what he is proposing is amnesty," said Rep. James Sensenbrenner, the lawmaker who would lead House of Representatives negotiators in any attempt to draft a compromise immigration bill this year.

Bush insisted that he has no interest in amnesty for illegal immigrants and appealed for opponents of his sweeping immigrant reform bill to work "like the spirit of this country."

The votes on the Senate floor gave fresh momentum to legislation that closely follows Bush's call for a broad bill. The measure includes options to ensure the borders, the citizenship-related provisions for illegal immigrants and a new guest worker program for as many as 200,000 people a year. Senate passage probably will come next week.

Sen. David Vitter led the drive to strip from the bill a provision to give an eventual chance at citizenship to illegal immigrants who have been in the country more than two years. His attempt failed, 66-33, to a bipartisan coalition, and the provision survived. In all, 41 Democrats joined with 24 Republicans and cast independence to turn back the proposal.

The vote to build what supporters called a "real fence"—as distinct from the virtual fence already incorporated in the legislation—was 83-16. The fence would be built in areas "most often used by smugglers and illegal aliens," as determined by federal officials. Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions estimated the cost at roughly $3.2 million per mile, more than $900 million for 300 miles.

It marked the first significant victory for conservatives eager to leave their stamp on a measure that looks increasingly as if it is headed toward Senate passage.

"What we have here has become a symbol for the right wing in American politics," said Sen. Dick Durbin, the Democratic second-ranking Democrat. He said passage would mean "our relationship with Mexico would come down to a barrier between our two countries."

The House legislation passed over strenuous Democratic opposition, it would make all illegal aliens subject to prosecution as felons and impose construction of a 700-mile fence along the Mexican border—more than twice as long as the barrier the Senate backed. AP

53 dead after Taliban raid on Afghan town

KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN—TALIBAN INsurgents launched a major attack on a town in the southern Afghan province of Helmand and 13 policemen and 40 Taliban were killed in nine hours of fighting, government officials said on Thursday.

In a separate incident, a suicide car bomber attacked a convoy in the western city of Herat, killing himself and an American, police said. The American was a civilian state department contractor, the US Embassy said.

The Taliban attacked the southern town, Musa Qala, on Wednesday evening and the fighting went on until early on Thursday, government officials said.

"Thirteen policemen were killed and six were injured," the interior ministry said.

"Forty people on the enemy side were killed," a ministry official said, citing a statement from spokesperson Yousuf Stanikzai.

The Taliban have stepped up attacks on foreign and Afghan government forces in recent months. The violence in parts of the country in the south it has been since the Taliban regime were driven from power in late 2001.

Helmand's deputy governor, Amir Mohammad Akhundzada, said it was the biggest attack in the province since the end of Taliban rule. Twenty-eight of Taliban were involved, he said.

Fighting was continuing as security forces battled the insurgents as they withdrew, Akhundzada said, adding there had been some civilian casualties but he did not know how many.

British troops are in charge of security in the province but no foreign soldiers were involved in the battle, he said. He said the interior ministry said it was a civilian convoy and the dead Americans were a civilian training Afghan police.

The Taliban focused their attack on Musa Qala on government offices and police stations and many shops in the town's market caught fire during the battle, Akhundzada said.

The town, 470 km southwest of the capital, Kabul, is about 40 km north of the province's Sangin district, the scene of heavy clashes between Taliban and foreign and government forces.

A Taliban commander, speaking by telephone, said 38 policemen had been killed. Taliban spokesperson Qari Mohammad Yousuf said the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency Taliban had captured the town but later withdrew.

The recent surge in violence comes as NATO members are sending reinforcements to boost their peacekeeping force from 15,000 to 16,000.

With about 23,000 troops, the United States has the largest force in Afghanistan since its military involvement began in October 2001.

A Canadian overseas soldier was killed in neighboring Kandahar province on Wednesday hours before Canada's parliament narrowly backed a two-year extension of Canada's Afghan mission to February 2009.

The US military said 79 Taliban were killed and 20 captured in the fighting in Panjwai district, 25 km west of Kandahar town.

The Taliban were ousted by US-led forces in late 2001 after refusing to hand over Osama bin Laden, architect of the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States. Reuters

KILLED—Canadian Capt. Nichola Goddard. Script Goddard is undated photo. AP, FILE

RELATIVES of a victim of the Russian hostage siege crying in the cemetery in Beslan, North Ossetia, Sept. 6, 2004. AFP

Beslan victims demand harsh sentence on attacker

VLADIKAVKAZ, RUSSIA—Relatives of those killed in the Beslan school massacre called for a harsh sentence—even death—as the sending of a guilty verdict against the sole surviving hostage-taker entered its third day Thursday.

Some of those who lost loved ones to the September 2004 tragedy think a death-old national moratorium on capital punishment should be lifted for Nurpashi Kulayev, 25, the sole survivor among the 32 hostage-takers.

"I want an adequate sentence. He deserves death. His crime cannot be justified," said Ella Kesayeva, whose nine-year-old daughter was killed in the world's bloodiest hostage drama.

"Whatever they deed, our children were held hostage, denied sense, learned for lack of oxygen in a crowded room and smiled their mothers because they were not allowed to go to toilet," Kesayeva said, tears streaking her face.

"Even if there is a moratorium, I want Kulayev sentenced to death. Maybe one day the moratorium will be lifted and he will die," she added. AFP

No one knows how many illegals in UK—Blair

LONDON—THE AURA OF UNFAIRness that hung over Prime Minister Tony Blair's government grew Wednesday when he admitted that it has no idea exactly how many ill-legal immigrants are in Britain.

"There are no official estimates of the number of illegal immigrants into the United Kingdom," Blair told parliament where the main opposition Conservative united on the issue.

"By its very nature illegal immigration is difficult to measure and any estimates would be highly speculative."

Immigration minister Tony McNulty told BBC television later that the best estimate of the number of illegal immigrants, which was "roughly in the ball park," was between 150,000 and 570,000, and it could take 10 years to deport them.

Blair sought to use the issue, which dominated the morning newspapers and radio talk shows—as pressure his controversial plan to introduce ID cards for everyone in the country.

"We need identity cards both for foreign nationals and for British nationals," he said. "If we want to stop people coming in and out of our country and check the identity of people here, that is what we have to do."

But with his popularity among voters at its lowest point since he came to power nine years ago, and his Labour government reshuffled (or even) barons, Blair was left on the defensive.

In a rare exchange across the floor of the lower House of Commons, Conservative leader David Cameron told the prime minister sounded "rattled" and that the government was in "paralysis."

The immigration flap grew out of the resignation of Home Secretary, the Home Office official in charge of deportations. He told a parliamentary committee that he did not have "the faintest idea" how many illegal immigrants were in the country.

Published reports were not too surprised, given that visitors to Britain go through immigration controls only when they arrive, and that there has never been a post-time ID card system in its continental Europe. AFP

Old aircraft carrier to serve as artificial reef off Florida coast

USS KIRCRAFT carrier Oriskany sinking May 17 to become the world's largest intentionally created artificial reef. AP, FILE

MIAMI—THE USS ORISKANY AIRCRAFT carrier on Wednesday became the first US warship scuttled as an artificial reef after explosive charges sent it to the ocean floor off Florida's Gulf Coast.

A little over 30 minutes after the explosive charges were set off, the 270-m, 32,000-ton US Navy vessel was completely submerged.

"It's been successful," US Navy spokesperson Jeff Davis said after the sinking of the ship 27 km off Pensacola, in western Florida.

US Navy divers will inspect the shipwreck on Thursday to determine whether it sits upright or is slightly off kilter, as intended.

"It's kind of sad," said retired US Navy pilot Stuart Reynolds, who had flown missions from the Oriskany during the Vietnam War and watched the impending ship go to its watery grave.

"But now she has a new life; she's better off than being torn up for metal blades," he said, speaking by cell phone from the Reef Gang, one of the hundreds of boats that sailed out into the Gulf of Mexico to watch the aircraft carrier's final moments afloat.

"Oh my God, she's gone," he said minutes after the ship was completely submerged.

Munching on a pork chop that Reynolds' captain, "Daddy," grilled on the fishing boat's barbecue, Reynolds said he planned to dive the wreck with his family.

The Oriskany is the first US Navy warship intentionally sunk to create an artificial reef to attract local growth, scuba divers, fish and fishermen. It is also the largest ship ever sunk on purpose to create a reef. AFP

MOBILE LEARNING FOR KIDS
Handog ng Globe sa Buwan ng mga Ina

Globe pays tribute to a yearlong partnership with Gizmo Advisory Board (GAB)

Recognizing the need for parents to address the issue of responsible mobile parenting as well as take part in the holistic development of the Filipino child, Globe Gizmo Prepaid partnered with The Parenting Company to convene some of the country's top family, communications and education experts for the first ever advisory board on responsible mobile connectivity for the youth. Dubbed the Gizmo Advisory Board (GAB), the group sought to study the Filipino youth's mobile usage habits, pinpointing significant issues and formulating projects that are attuned to the segment's distinct needs.

For the past year, the GAB had actively set up activities in their effort to encourage the use of technology as a non-threatening influence for child learning and nurturing. The GAB endeavored to rise the challenge of modernity into an opportunity for development and pursued activities that aimed to re-introduce and reconfigure child nurturing methods to keep up with the needs of modern Filipino child.

The members of the board consist of reputable parenting advocates.

Ms. Emily Abrera is the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. An icon in the advertising industry in the country, she is currently Chairman Emeritus of McCann Erickson Philippines, the country's leading advertising agency.

Dr. Lolita Ho is a former Dean of the College of Education in the University of the Philippines. Although her main focus nowadays is her practice of clinical psychology, she continues to teach at the University of the Philippines and gives her time to advisory boards that are in line with her advocacy.

Ms. Tina Juan is popularly known for her daily morning show "In Fitness & In Health" and his her fitness column in the Philippine Daily Inquirer. A certified fitness professional, she is also the fitness columnist for Health Today, Badminton Philippines and Metro Magazine and the author of "Lose Weight! Feel Good! Look Great!"

Mr. Francis Kong is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Funeworks, Inc., the group that brought to the country Mad Science, the latest rage in teaching science. Also a writer and excellent speaker, he has written books on entrepreneurship, life values and parenting and speaks on topics such as leadership and management.

Ms. Francie Lacsina is the Directress of The Learning Tree Center, an elementary education institution dedicated to the holistic development of children. The Learning Tree Center has been recognized for its non-traditional ways of inspiring and educating its students.

Ms. Marisol Pangilinan is a multi-awarded actress turned "mompreneur" and writer/columnist. She is the author of the best-selling book "Mommy Talk" and columnist of the same in the Philippine Star. A well-known parenting advocate in the country, she is a convener of the Philippine Parenting Convention.

Mr. Glori Reyes is the coach of our national basketball team and President of coachream.inc, a business and executive coaching company. The former coach of the Coca-Cola tigers, he is a well-known sports figure in the country and has also made his mark as a motivational speaker with his talks on "How to Transform Your Family into a Team."

Dr. Nina Yuseo is the President of the Museo Pambata and the Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Committee of the World Board of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. She is also a writer of children's books.

Dr. Grace Yuo is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of the Philippines teaching post-graduate courses. She was a recipient of the UP Chancellor's Award for Most Outstanding Teacher in 2000. A frequent speaker on parenting and education, a voracious reader and classical music advocate.

Consumer Business Head of Globe Telecom, Ferdinand M. Dela Cruz, underscored the importance of instilling responsible mobile connectivity to Globe Gizmo's young subscriber base. "Advancements in communications technology serve not as a stand-in for human contact, but as an enhancer of existing relationships," says dela Cruz. "And through Globe Gizmo, Globe continuously strives to strengthen the bond between parent and child," he adds.

Gizmo Youth Debate takes on responsible mobile usage

To mark the launch of GAB, Globe Gizmo Prepaid initiated the first ever public debate for children at the elementary school level. Held at the Claro M. Recto Hall of the University of the Philippines last Sept. 12, 2005, the tournament posed the controversial issue of whether children should be allowed to use mobile phones in school.

The board chose The Learning Tree Child Growth Center, a progressive educational institution, as the pilot school for the Globe Gizmo Debate Tournament. Months before the actual debate, interested students from grades four to six signed up for workshops and seminars facilitated by former champion student debater Fabian Mangulabnan. The special classes helped the children fine tune their arguments and hone their public speaking skills. Three students were eventually formed into The Learning Tree Debate Society from which the tournament participants were chosen.

The British Parliamentary System format was chosen for the debate. Government teams argued for banning mobile phones because it was a distraction, encouraged children to spend, and could be used for cheating. Opposition teams, on the other hand, focused on the connectivity and learning that mobile phones could provide, emphasizing that phone ownership itself could help children learn the meaning of responsibility. "Don't underestimate us just because we're kids. Having mobile phones in school will help us practice self-control," asserts Melika Ligot of the Opening Opposition team.

According to Cathy Santamaria, Globe Head of Segment Marketing, the group was convened by Globe Gizmo Prepaid in line with its objective of promoting responsible mobile parenting. "As the country's first prepaid mobile phone brand for children, Globe Gizmo Prepaid is committed to initiating noble innovations that are age-appropriate and beneficial to the holistic development of the Filipino child," she adds.

Bringing a day of fun and wonder to the Baseco kids

The joy of learning and discovery can brighten the life of any child, and those from underprivileged communities are particularly in need of this special gift. Through the GAB, Globe Gizmo brought a day of fun and wonder to less fortunate children from Barangay Baseco in Tondo, Manila last December.

The residents of Baseco were struggling to recover from the effects of several large fires which ravaged their community. Globe Gizmo and GMA's outreach program brought new hope to these families through the simple act of giving their children a chance to learn and play in a fun, safe, and nurturing environment.

Almost a hundred Baseco kids enjoyed a tour through the Museo Pambata and a special presentation courtesy of Mad Science. The youngsters, mostly aged 6 to 12 years old and studying in elementary schools near their area, arrived bright and early at the Museo, accompanied by designated chaperons from their community. They were warmly welcomed by Museo Pambata President Dr. Nina Yuseo and celebrity parents Anthony Pangilinan, along with representatives from Globe Gizmo and The Parenting Company. After having some morning snacks, the children eagerly explored the different rooms of the Museo, led by friendly tour guides.

As they assembled for lunch, the children excitedly recounted the morning's activities. Five-year old Daniel beamed happily as he shouted, "Nag-enjoy po ako saka marami akong nalalaman." ("I enjoyed it a lot and learned many things.") Meanwhile, a fifth grader in fifth grade named Regie said "Nasaya po ako kasi natuto ako sa pagtitipid at pakikisama." ("I'm happy because I learned through sharing and listening.")

The project was part of the GAB's efforts to promote children's right to quality education and Globe Gizmo's contribution to the holistic development of the Filipino child.

GAB designs Globe Gizmobits for kids

Learning has become more fun and enjoyable for kids with daily educational tips received as text for free with Gizmobits.

Developed by GAB, Gizmobits include instructive text messages that ensure that kids are getting new, exciting, reliable and helpful information.

Globe Gizmo is also packed with mobile parenting features to ensure communication and learning. "Parent's Emergency Text that allows the kid to send emergency text messages in the absence of load. Another feature is the Quiet Text that lets the kid send instant messages via a simple combination of numbers in the keypad. Low Load Alert functions as a SOS signal to the parents that their kid already needs reloading. Finally, Word Up—a language tool that consists of dictionary, thesaurus, puzzles, translations and vocabulary features.

COCA-COLA'S Ad'Pon (center) contests the rebound vs Jaypee Belmonte (left) and Mike Harper of Ginebra Wednesday night. The Tigers won, 95-84. ALEX BADAYOS

Aces seek crucial win versus Beermen

COMING FROM A BIG WIN, ALASKA NOW looks forward to an outright quarterfinal berth and a winning streak of its own.

The Aces hope to achieve the twin goals when they take on the league-leading San Miguel Beermen at 4:40 p.m. in today's Coca-Cola/Inquirer PBA Philippine Cup at the Ynares Center in Antipolo City.

Talk 'N Text and Sta. Lucia collide later at 7:35 p.m. with both teams desperately trying to finally snap out of losing ways.

Alaska coach Tim Cone's early worries about adjustments with the arrival of Willie Miller and John Ratliff seemed very after the new acquisitions combined for 36 points when the Aces throttled the Realtors, 98-91, Sunday.

"I was right when I said that we're going to fall into steps behind because of the two new players on our team," said Cone. "But we expect to move forward in our next games since these two games are important."

San Miguel, which is also looking to extend its two-game streak, will enter the game already assured of an automatic semifinal slot. The Beermen booked their ticket to the next round after downing Coca-Cola, 99-92, last Saturday in San Fernando, La Union.

Although the underdog, Alaska is known to perform even better under pressure. During their win last Sunday, the Aces seemed to be teary as 22 points (17-5) in the third quarter before rallying out the Realtors' big fourth-quarter tab.

"Keeping our composure in the final stretch, that's something we have to work on," added Cone, who traded guards forward Dior Allado and the first round pick in the 2007 draft to acquire Miller and Ratliff.

Meanwhile, the Phoenix Fuel attempts to stop their five-game slump and stay alive for an automatic quarterfinal slot, while the Bolts try to halt a two-game skid.

Meanwhile, for the first time in a year, the league returns to the Philsports Arena with a doubleheader set this Sunday.

The Dwarfmark Giants and Sta. Lucia Realtors meet in the 4:30 p.m. curtain raiser before the Red Bull Barakos take on the Coca-Cola Tigers in the main game set at 6:30 p.m.

The weekend marks the first time the playing arena will be made available to the public since it was inaugurated in 1999. It will also serve as the celebration of a nonstop show that was supposed to be held at the venue last February.

—Mary Anthony Reyes

STANDINGS	W	L
San Miguel	11	3
Purefoods	11	4
Red Bull	8	6
Alaska	7	7
Coca-Cola	7	7
Ginebra	6	7
Talk 'N Text	5	8
4th Pct	5	8
Sta. Lucia	3	11

GAMES TODAY
(Ynares Center)
4:40 p.m. — San Miguel vs. Alaska
7:35 p.m. — Talk 'N Text vs. Sta. Lucia

No spoiling Santy victory ride today

By Mourey B. Castillo

TAGAYTAY CITY—EVEN WITH HIS NATURAL MOUNTAIN-CLIMBING SKILLS, Frederick Felicisimo could only finish just slightly ahead of overall leader Santy Hernandez in the back-breaking penultimate stage of the Tour Filipinas yesterday.

JOHN Rendon gets a fresh splash after his stage victory. BOY SANTIAGO

Felicisimo seemed little time admonishing the inevitable victory of Batanes, who allowed his chief rival to close only nine seconds from the huge overall lead he showed of the 147.4-kilometer Tagaytay-Tagaytay leg won by unheralded John Rendon.

With an overall lead of 3 minutes and 58 seconds over Felicisimo, Hernandez is expected to use the 75-km criterium final race in Manila today as nothing more than a victory ride as Tuesday Pariyak Pinoy Marathon champion.

"Mongol lang ginag hindian ito, ako-ner sa Byne (3 seconds) lang and hold for dis, thank God)," Hernandez said before getting a warm, tight hug from Batanes Rendolfe, whom he will marry on June 18.

"Lahat naman kami nagbi-bonggo na ang champion sa Tour ako lang ang pinakaf as one tg Byne (4)Ed to dream of winning the Tour. It just so happened that God blessed me this year."

Felicisimo, winner of the strength-sapping Baguio leg, attacked as expected but could gain little headway in the rain-soaking climb along Tagaytay Road" in Talisay, Batangas, less than 1.0 km from the finish.

Hernandez, who later admitted to being "pressure" came up with one final push to clinch in alone in 3:56s spot for the day with a time of 3 hours, 49 minutes and 30 seconds.

Felicisimo, 6:07 behind at the start of the day, clocked in with the eight-man fifth group only nine seconds ahead of Hernandez, who later praised his mate that began for his gallant stand.

"Congratulations din ko kay Felicisimo (I also congratulate Felicisimo)," said the sweaty, tearful Batanes as the finish.

The 29-year-old Rendon broke down after savouring his first career leg win with a time of 3:40:55 for the seventh stage that took the riders through the up-and-down roads of western Batangas.

Defending champion Warren Davadilla tried to salvage a leg win but came up short, finishing second for the day over Gene Nardo Jr. (3:41:17 minutes) for fifth spot.

Also the champion in 1998, the 32-year old Davadilla is doomed to finish fifth-overall, nearly nine minutes off Batanes-lead time of 20:19:50.

"He (Hernandez) rode like a true champion," Davadilla said. "He deserves it."

Jetmon Oliveta, the first stage winner and owner of the yellow jersey until after the La Union-to-Baguio third stage, stayed in third, 7:04 behind.

Rookie Mith Villanueva, a member of the champion-team Cesmart Walks, kept fourth spot, just 20 seconds ahead of Davadilla, with Jonas Martinez in sixth spot, close to 18 minutes behind.

Rounding out the Top 10 were Renato Magbanua in seventh, Harvey Hosan, another rookie (3h:41), 2003 champ Arnel Quintos in eighth (3h:48) and Rhodney, who won just 10:32-all.

Cossack riders cop team title

TAGAYTAY—SKIPPER RONATO SORIANO spent spent breakfast at Sand Jaja burger yesterday to power the Cossack Rolfer Riders to the team title of the Tour Filipinas Bombay Bicycle Race 2006.

The Philippine team members clocked in fifth in the punishing 147.4-kilometer grind from here and finished Cossack posted a total time of 11:38 hours, 35 minutes and 46.202 seconds after seven stages and a little over 1,100 kilometers.

It was worth P100,000 for the team members, who rallied from seventh place after the opening stage on Friday last week.

A Jubilant Soriano Dolosa, the Tour's 1992 and 1999 individual champion and Cossack coach, said his boys deserved to win because they worked together as a team.

Alejandro Galicia-Jr. placed seventh for the day together with rookie Jonathan Valenzuela and Michael Reyes placed 22nd for the day as Cossack showed complete team dominance of the stage.

Elite Sports finished second overall, 42 minutes and 48.322 seconds behind and clinched the P40,000 runner-up purse. Air21 wound up 31:42.494 adrift for third and P30,000.

RESULTS AFTER STAGE 7

20:19 Hans Emerald Valley, 20:19	3.56 Davadilla (Mil Athlete), 20:27:19
20:1 Gutierrez (Air21) same time	3.7 Ramirez (Team Bike) 20:28:32
20:1 Valdez (Air21) same time	3.10 Sanchez (Cossack Valley) 20:30:04
20:1 Hernandez (Cossack Valley) same time	3.11 Jose (Elite Sports) 20:31:32
OVERALL STANDINGS	3.14 Gabriel (Elite Sports) 20:32:39
1.1 Hernandez (Cossack), 20:19:50	3.15 Cabanero (Elite Sports) 20:33:39
2.2 Felicisimo (Air21), 20:20:32	3.16 Tandoy (Elite Sports) 20:33:52
3.3 Nardo Jr. (Elite Sports), 20:20:39	3.17 Quintos (Air21) 20:34:48
4.4 Valdez (Air21) same time	3.18 Cabanero (Elite Sports) 20:35:39

3.1 Gutierrez (Air21), 20:19:47	3.19 Rodriguez (Mil Athlete), 20:35:51
3.2 Jose (Team Emerald Valley), 20:20:02	3.20 Ramirez (Team Bike), 20:36:02
3.3 Hernandez (Cossack), 20:20:32	3.21 Valdez (Air21), 20:36:48
3.4 Quintos (Air21), 20:20:48	3.22 Hernandez (Cossack), 20:37:39
3.5 Magbanua (Cossack), 20:21:39	3.23 Gutierrez (Air21), 20:38:39
3.6 Rodriguez (Mil Athlete), 20:22:39	3.24 Cabanero (Elite Sports), 20:39:39
3.7 Ramirez (Team Bike), 20:23:32	3.25 Jose (Elite Sports), 20:40:39
3.8 Gutierrez (Air21), 20:24:39	3.26 Cabanero (Elite Sports), 20:41:39
3.9 Cabanero (Elite Sports), 20:25:39	3.27 Quintos (Air21), 20:42:39

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
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TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

It's thriller night in playoffs

James, Cavs push Pistons to the brink

CLEVELAND superstar LeBron James (right) leaves Tayshaun Prince of the Detroit Pistons biting dust on the way to a slam dunk in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference semifinals.

AUBURN HILLS, MICHIGAN— All series long, the Detroit Pistons huffed and puffed. On Wednesday night, it was LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers who blew their house in.

A stunning role reversal on the Cavs' fairy tale ride?

Maybe not.

"It's just basketball," James said. "They're not the big, bad Wolf. And we're not the Three Little Pigs."

James scored 32 points and assisted on three Zydrunas Ilgauskas jumpers as the Cavs beat the Pistons in an 86-84 victory over Detroit — their third straight win to erase a 3-2 deficit in the second-round series.

The Pistons, on the brink of elimination after two straight trips to the NBA Finals, have not been giving much respect to the Cavs, who are in the second round for the first time since 1993.

That should change now, but will it be too late for the big, bad Pistons?

Game 6 is set for 9 p.m. tomorrow in Friday night in Cleveland, and if the Pistons force a Game 7, they will be back on their home court Sunday.

"LeBron is playing unbelievably, and they're playing with a lot of confidence," Detroit coach Flip Saunders said. "But it doesn't mean that series is over; we just have to invest in what we did for much of the season."

Ben Wallace blew a chance to give the Pistons the lead for the first time since early in the second quarter when he missed one free throw with 40 seconds left. That left one of the NBA's seven best shooters 6-for-7 for the game, which remained tied at 84.

James slithered to Gooden on the ensuing possession, and the power forward came through with a low-post basket to put the Cavs ahead by two with 27 seconds left.

"I took a picture of the basket," Gooden said. "That is what my Freshmen coach in high school used to tell me, take my time and make the shot."

After a timeout, Donyell Marshall blocked Tayshaun Prince's shot in the lane and James tipped a rebound—off Lindsey Hunter's missed jumper—to teammate Eric Snow, who tossed the ball down the court to Ilgauskas.

The Pistons fouled the ball handler with 1.8 seconds left, but could not get a shot off to try to force overtime—or vote the game they didn't seem to deserve.

"That was about as perfect a game of basketball as you can play against that team," Marshall said.

Cleveland beat Game 4 74-72 and 86-77 to even the series after being routed in Game 1 and losing Game 2 by six points after a big early deficit.

After losing Game 3 in Cleveland, Rasheed Wallace guaranteed Game 4 would be the last game played there because the Pistons would clinch once the series hit Game 5.

"Everybody wrote us off, but we started to get some confidence in the second half of Game 2 and we've just kept it going," Cavs reserve Damon Jones said.

Detroit hopes to close them by postseason experience. Before the Pistons beat the Los Angeles Lakers in the 2004 NBA Finals, they fell behind New Jersey 3-2—with three straight losses—before winning on the road and at home to advance to the conference finals. AP

• MORE on THE SPORTS: Pistons vs. 76ers (Thurs. 8 p.m., 5 p.m. replay)

Spurs' title bid alive and kicking

SAN ANTONIO—AFTER one wild, late loss, then another, the San Antonio Spurs could only shake their heads.

How the Mavericks know the feeling.

With the conference finals in their sights, Dallas was turned away by Tim Duncan making his first 12 shots and scoring 36 points. Tony Parker scored 27 and the Spurs withstanding two jump balls and two shots in the final 0.3 seconds in a 98-97 victory Wednesday night.

By winning Game 5 of this amazing second-round series, San Antonio forced a sixth game Friday night in Dallas. It'll be hard to top this one, but that's what everyone thought after Games 3 and 4.

"We had the mentality during this game that we had to be the other gamers...save steal, stay close, one rebound, one basket has made the difference," said Spurs forward Manu Ginobili, whose free throw with 1:59 left wound up being the game's decisive point.

The Spurs knew they could still beat the Mavs and regained each to secure their rematch Saturday.

"I haven't seen four games that have been this close," Ginobili said. "This just shows how evenly matched these two teams are. It is crazy how a single play can decide the game."

The Spurs evened their first-three game losing streak of the season. By getting within 3-2 in the series, the Mavericks face the pressure of attaining at home or having to return to San Antonio for Game 7.

"We didn't expect them to roll over," Dallas' Jerry Stackhouse said. "They're the world champs. They did what they're supposed to do. Every possession in the game meant something."

TIM DUNCAN'S lurking presence keeps San Antonio's hopes afloat.

The Mavericks had two chances to win in the bizarre final sequence, but Jason Terry missed a 21-foot fadeaway then Dirk Nowitzki...who had 31 points, his high for the series—missed a tip-in chance at the buzzer.

Both players took the blame for the loss. Terry said he should've driven to the basket ("I settled right there. It's definitely my fault.") and Nowitzki lamented not catching the ball and putting it back up.

"I probably had enough time to take a shot," he said. "We didn't lose the game in the last two possessions. We had plenty of opportunities to win. It's enough loss, but that's basketball."

Nowitzki's first 3-pointer of the series slid it at 93, and the ball went back in his hands with under 30 seconds left. That's when things turned wacky.

Nowitzki went up for a go-ahead 3-footer in the lane when Bruce Bowen—who surprisingly hadn't been covering him much all game—swept in from behind and put the hand over the ball. It was already a jump ball with 0.3 seconds left in the game and five seconds left on the shot clock.

"I was just fortunate enough to get my hand over the ball," Bowen said. "He was taking up. I think he felt he got enough space to between me and him at that point and he went to go pull up."

Said Dirk: "I don't want to give me 'excuses' yet," Dirk said. AP

CLEVELAND superstar LeBron James (right) leaves Tayshaun Prince of the Detroit Pistons biting dust on the way to a slam dunk in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference semifinals.

Bonds 'Babe' run chase takes another vacation

HOUSTON, TEXAS—BARRY BONDS TOOK A night off from his pursuit of the all-time Major League baseball home run record Wednesday but the San Francisco Giants completed a three-game sweep in Houston with a 13-1 romp.

Bonds sat out one night after being hit in the shoulder by a pitch from Houston's Russ Springer, who received a standing ovation as a result.

Nagged by accusations of steroid doping and numerous links in the BALCO steroid scandal, 41-year-old Bonds has been cheered only by home fans in his quest to match Babe Ruth for second on the all-time HR homer list with 714.

Bonds, stuck on 711 for eight games, is idle Thursday as the Giants travel to Bay Area rival Oakland, where Bonds is expected to play three games starting Friday as a designated hitter.

Batting wagging knee and elbow injuries, Bonds is signed only through next season but would likely need to play at least one more season to approach the all-time homers mark of 755 by Hank Aaron.

Bonds' agent has said he would consider offers for next year and an American League club like Oakland might be an answer (other than a switch league club like the Giants).

BONDS: Hit in the shoulder.

American League clubs do have an advantage since instead of pitchers who Interleague games there has been a designated hitter in the place instead of pitchers while National League teams force batters to pitch. If, Bonds would give Bonds a chance to swing for the fences without fetching if he plays in 2007. AFP

LeBron, Shaq, Kobe make all-NBA squad

NEW YORK—CLEVELAND Cavaliers forward LeBron James was the leading vote-getter on the All-NBA first team, which included Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant and Phoenix Suns guard Steve Nash.

Dallas forward Dirk Nowitzki and Miami center Shaquille O'Neal rounded out the first team announced Wednesday by the league.

James, who averaged 31.4 points, 7.0 rebounds and 6.6 assists in leading the Cavaliers to their first playoff appearance in eight years, Michael Jordan, Oscar Robertson and Jerry West are the only other players in NBA history to average at least 31 points, seven rebounds and six assists in a season.

James received 114 first-place votes and 430 total points from the panel of 126 media members.

Bryant, who led the league with 35.4 points a game, was selected to the team for the fourth time. He scored 50 or more points six times this season.

Nash, who won the MVP award for the second straight season, led the league with 18.8 assists. Nowitzki averaged a career-high 26.6 points and led the Mavericks with 9.0 rebounds.

O'Neal made the team for the seventh straight season and the eighth overall. He averaged 20 points, 9.2 rebounds and led the league in field goal percentage (60 percent) for the ninth time, tying Wilt Chamberlain for the most all-time. AP

O'NEAL

NASH

World Cup: Japan sees 'fishy' omen

YOKOHAMA—BY THE HOPE crane are to be believed, Japan's players in next month's World Cup are overall fish in a big pond.

An aquarium in Yokohama is organizing a pitches World Cup, in which fish the colors of national teams fight for a ball packed with bait in a tank holding two goalposts.

It's not the best showing for the home team.

Japanese culture likes analogies on the football field are represented in the tank by blue fishes' fairgrounds...seem to have less fighting spirit than Israel, played by Yellow Tang.

"The blue Paracts Surgeon tend to stay as a corner of the fish tank while Yellow Tang a story arrow," said Osamu Matsuzaki, a spokesman for the Hakkeijima Sea Paradise in Yokohama, south of Tokyo.

Asian champions Japan has been drawn in a tough group at the World Cup including five time champions Brazil, Croatia and Australia.

The match is held twice a day at bowling time at the aquarium's aqua museum.

The aquariums will have live, rare fish hosting the colors of other teams.

"It is the time of the season for excursions by schoolchildren, they are cheering for the fish," Matsuzaki said. AFP

FC Barcelona rules Champions League

SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE—PETIT (L). THE man on the field, no one thought Juliano Belletti would be the one to make the difference in the Champions League final.

Not even Belletti.

But the Barcelona right back came to the field with 10 minutes to go Wednesday and soon scored the deciding goal to give the Spanish champions a 2-1 win over 10-man Arsenal to win Europe's most prestigious club competition.

Arsenal, which played with 10 men from the 18th minute after goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was red carded, took the lead in the 37th on Hendr de Fraitor when Sol Campbell headed in the first goal.

Samuel Eto'o equalized for Barcelona in the 76th minute, and Belletti scored the winning goal in the 81st.

Henrik Larsson found Belletti on the run, and the Brazilian charged through the Arsenal defense and sent his angled shot off replacement goalkeeper Manuel Almunia and into the net for his first goal in a European competition.

"Scoring a goal in the Champions League is very difficult for a full back," Belletti said. "I thought this afternoon that perhaps I would have played, but I know it was difficult. The Champions League is for all the people who don't appear in the press, it's for everyone."

Arsenal, which was playing in its first Champions League final, lost Lehmann when he brought down Eto'o just outside the Arsenal area.

Still, Arsenal took a 1-0 halftime lead after Campbell headed in Thierry Henry's free kick.

Henry squandered a chance to add a second goal, shooting straight at Barcelona goalkeeper Victor Valdes to close the second half.

It was a disappointing homecoming for Henry, whose team had gone a Champions League record 18 games without conceding a goal. And the France striker was thrown with Norwegian referee Terje Hauge.

"I don't know if she red had a Barcelona shirt on it or something," Henry said. "If they don't want us to win it, just say it right from the start." AP

BARCELONA'S Juliano Belletti celebrates his crucial goal.

Bernis regains Samsung lead by one stroke

LOS CIPS.—JUN BERNIS BOUNCED BACK with a 3-under par 69 yesterday and marched to double legacy by Paul Aduarte on the 18th hole to regain a one-stroke lead heading into the final round of the Samsung Amateur Golf Tour at the Summit Point and Country Club.

Bernis, a former national amateur champion, toshed a double bogey on No. 3 to taste the rough yes 72 layout with six birdies. Then 69 boosted him back on top with a 213 aggregate. He led the field with a 71 after the first round.

Behavior, who also fired a 69 to grab the 36-hole lead, actually pushed the lead to five with three birdies after since bidentally occupied seeing home with a 48 and a 73.

The 27-year-old Subaeric, now training under the National Caddies Open program, improved blue 11 and 15. He dropped out of the lead when he stumbled two strokes adrift before holding out on the 18th.

Kim Chang-hoo, the former champion of the annual event sponsored by Samsung, matched Bernis' 69 and teamed up to chart with 216. He would need to come up with a stronger final round to have a chance of nailing the crown.

Otherwise, it would be some time after to the chase for top honors in this second leg of the five-stage circuit, backed by Taylor Made, Callaway, Mizuno, Titleist and Gunsen Chitosaki Sports Limited.

Ezer's Bobo struggled with a 74 and fell into a tie with Ronnie Tiamsanguan (71) at 222 while Joseph Labajo shot a 75 and shared sixth place with Evangeline Dino Bunyol 225.

The three other members were Lu Cong Gong (70-220), Hubby Gregorio (76-226) and Chin Jo Gaerne (79-229).

Meanwhile, Jhun Song hits shot a 73 to take a two-stroke lead over Blended Gunigo (73) in Class A of the men's division of this tournament supported by Asia 88.2, Wow 89.1, Magic 89.5 and 99.1 FC Sports Plus as partners. Michael Mendoza stood three shots behind with a 76.

Bonny Hurtado came up with a 75 to post a four-shot Class B lead over Virgilio Alandia, Jr. Allan Alupo and Al Saavedra, who all had 79s.

BACK ON TOP: Jun Bernis hunts out of deep rough.

Gahol keys Taguig five win over Pangasinan

BRINGS GAHOL PLAYED THE HERO'S ROLE IN the clinch as forward Taguig outlasted the visiting Pangasinan Medical Schools, 89-79, Wednesday night in the 2006 Governor's Cup-NBC national basketball championship at the UP Diliman gym in Taguig City.

Gahol Games registered with 17 points four as was Gabol, filling in for a still injured Mark Victorio, who delivered the key blows for Mayor Freddie Tinga's Taguig squad.

With the scores tied at 79, the former Red Bull forward banged straight unanswered points for a 83-93 Taguig edge before Pangasinan staged its semi-stint rally to come within 93-88. 31.8 secs.

He became a shooter between Gahol and Pangasinan's Alvin Teleñiso going into the last two minutes with Bombed Islands at 18 touching down Taguig's neck, 67-66, with 11.3 seconds left.

From there, Gahol, Guerra and Louie Abad got all the clogs before allowing Teleñiso to tie the game at the end of the buzzer sounded.

Cotta bingo continues

Earlier, defending champion Dennis Cotta started in northern swing on a high note by clubbing his victims Lucena-Sta. Rosa of Sen. Ramon "Bingging" Lacson and Mayor Jerry Kantada, 102-74.

Taguig and Dennis tightened their hold in the northern and southern divisions, respectively, of the tournament sponsored by Powerade, Gatorade Endurance Formula, Boysen Paints, Spring Cooking Oil, Regent Foods, Pirelli Lightings, Bluflex and Petron Diamond.

Taguig scored its second to 1-2 while Dennis improved to 1-1.

The scores:

GUNIGO, NEC—Jhun 14, Gamboa 12, Velez 11, Langco 17, Dizon 11, Adarlo 11, Delight 10, Bulaca, Lanuza 1, Arroyo 2, Lindsay 2, Aranzado.

LUCENA—Domingo 17, Mesa 14, Bulanadi 8, Ramos 8, Velasco, Aquino, Bolanos 6, Abrenilla, Price 4, Espino 2, Sa 0.

QUARTERS: 32-17, 53-41, 83-58, 102-74

TAGUIG 89—Gahol 17, Galvez 16, Abad 8, Raguindin, Laguna 9, Arogancia 7, Aung 11, Constantino 6, Dominguez 4, Gil 2, Gotladera.

PANGASINAN 79—Valencia 18, Alcaraz 12, Ventura 8, Jose Ramos 8, Lee 8, Tampoco 7, Galanidon 4, Jose Mario 4, Bautista 3, Ruiz 2, Cruz 0, Ramos 0.

Quarters: 20-18, 41-38, 63-54, 89-79

Asian beach football stint for RP squad

MEMBERS of the RP team with delegation head and coach Mike Aflalo (extreme left, standing).

THE PHILIPPINES TAKE ON HOST Indonesia for the right to represent Southeast Asia in the first 2006 continental beach soccer qualifying tournament on May 22 to 26 in Bohol, where the top three finishers will compete in the Mobil Cup Brunei Football Championships in mid-June this year.

The Asian country will be joined by their counterparts from Europe, South America, and South America. Brazil won the world invitational championship by beating Portugal, 5-3, in the finals.

Bankrolled with Japan and Taiwan, the Philippine team, made up mostly of footy and All-Star players, needs at least a semi-finish a chance to qualify. Its mates in the other group are China, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates.

The team will be headed by Beach Football Association of the Philippines president Mike Aflalo.

"The Philippines was selected by FIFA to represent Southeast Asia because of our long history of playing beach football," said Aflalo. "The boys are basically players of qualifying despite the fact that Japan played four-th in last year's world championship."

The RP team, which is also supported by the Philippine Sports Commission, includes goal-tiff Bernard Tio, Mauricio Siaguan Jr., Marcelino Rivas, Lauro Bellarmine, Wilson de la Cruz, Rufino Zibetta, Philip Jose Caballero, Eduard Sacapano, Glen Arlanza, Andrei Bermejo, Demetrio Calligdong, and Wilmio Solano.

RP junior netters advance

SWEEPS SEED TO BE PHILIPPINES last to Nic. 2 Japan, 3-0. Jun finished second in its group yesterday and advanced to the quarterfinals of the World Juniors Tennis Championships Asia-Oceania zonal qualifying tournament at the Pasar Tennis Arena overseas in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Filipinos picked their second win as the superior of Singapore, 2-1, before losing to the Japanese, who topped Group A with a 3-0 record.

The RP squad of Francis Casey Alcantara, Alex Ty and Eric Ian Barnes, will now face top-seed China.

Unseeded New Zealand, without an in Group 3, will meet clash-seed Indonesia, third seed India will face Malaysia fourth seed Chinese Taipei, while Japan will challenge No. 8 Korea.

SPORTSWATCH

US, Aussie bets join int'l cockfest

SEVEN MORE POWERFUL COCKERS FROM THE UNITED STATES, AUSTRALIA, Japan, Malaysia and Guam have signed up for the first GLICO-Excel International Derby slated June 4, 7 and 9 at San Juan Coliseum. Roger Roberts of Georgia, the 2004 World Slasher Cup champion, led the Filipino breeders who signed up for the 60-cocker tournament by Singapore Enterprises' 2000 cockfighter. Also on this list are CW Lanier of Texas, Peter Zervos of Australia, Sidney Lemarque of Guam, Haruki Saito of Japan, Dr. Yeong of Malaysia and Evelyn San Juan of California. PR manager Pete Pineda said the majority the number of entries is up to 100.

80 fights restored in Pinoy derby

EIGHTY FIGHTS ARE ON AS THE "BIG BATTLE" IS GOING BEFORE WHICH gets going next year, today at the Pinoy City Cockpit. The derby is sponsored by Singapore Enterprises' 2000K and hosted by Roger Roberts, a Connecticut player 4-MMO Martin's derby Jesse Arroyo Bacolod Kabisig are Lito Delano, William Co, Pepito Dee, Sherie Lee, Tony Lasala, Pay Reyes, Capt. Fred Dino, Jerry Salvanera, Manny and Ernan Santos, Ramon Manemann, Richard Sales, John Montserrat, Peter Gatus, Bobby Cisneros, Rex Leung and the Manchurian brothers Tom Angeles, and Fred Ferrer and Fred.

Weigh-in for SJC special 5-cocker today

THE SELECTION OF TOP COCKERS TO GET AT THE SPECIAL 5-COCK DERBY TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY AT THE SAN JUAN COLISEUM IN SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA, WILL BE DECIDED BY THE WEIGH-IN TODAY AT THE SAME VENUE. Ten cockers are expected to participate in the derby, which is sponsored by Singapore Enterprises' 2000K and hosted by Roger Roberts, a Connecticut player. Leo Angeles, Jun Ong, Jerry Salvanera, Manny and Ernan Santos, Ramon Manemann, Richard Sales, John Montserrat, Peter Gatus, Bobby Cisneros, Rex Leung and the Manchurian brothers Tom Angeles, and Fred Ferrer and Fred.

The Tejada case: Is GAB remiss in its duty?

DO WE NEED STRICTER REGULATION OF basketball? Absolutely.

The accident-prone, spinal-cord injury suffered by PBA players Eugene Tejada of Purefoods last Sunday was a grim reminder of the danger inherent in contact sports like football, wrestling, boxing and basketball.

Catastrophic injury with prolonged disability, paralysis or even death happens, though, to the dash and dabble game.

The common injuries associated with basketball include finger dislocation or fracture, thumb sprain, ankle sprain, groin muscle sprain, "runner's knee," shin splints, shoulder dislocation, hamstring and/or quadriceps muscle strain, concussion, abrasion and laceration.

Tejada, a Filipino-American super who was born in Chula Vista, California, was set to undergo surgery yesterday at the Makati Medical Center to realign his dislocated spinal cord. Two days ago, Tejada's condition in his arms remained, but still he couldn't move his legs or wiggle his toes.

Gerby Tejada's son did not receive medical attention from the Games and Amusements Board. Why? And the GAB supposed to step in and control the fists and the elbows that sweep possession under its wings, the Philippine Basketball Association in this case, is only?

Isn't the GAB supposed to require the promoters to have a casualty ambulance and doctors at the playing venue? Why did it take too long for medical help from Cardiac Arrested to arrive (some 40 minutes more or less) at the Fiesta Sports Center in Antipolo City?

PBA commissioner Noli Eala said, "While it is provided in our contract that a standby medical team and an ambulance would be in the 40th playing season [so] all times, the circumstances brought about by the recent typhoon 'Caloy' [that] battered Metro Manila [and] the rest of Luzon [and] the Visayas [and] Mindanao [and] the Philippines [and] the world [and] the universe [and] the galaxy [and] the solar system [and] the Milky Way [and] the Big Bang [and] the Creation [and] God [and] Jesus Christ [and] Holy Ghost [and] Amen [and] Hallelujah [and] Praise the Lord [and] Pass the Plate [and] Offering [and] Tithes [and] Donations [and] Indulgences [and] Purgatory [and] Hell [and] Heaven [and] Eternity [and] Infinity [and] Nothingness [and] Zero [and] Void [and] Vacuum [and] Space [and] Time [and] Matter [and] Energy [and] Light [and] Darkness [and] Sound [and] Silence [and] Life [and] Death [and] Resurrection [and] Ascension [and] Pentecost [and] Trinity [and] Father [and] Son [and] Holy Spirit [and] Virgin Mary [and] Saints [and] Angels [and] Demons [and] Satan [and] Lucifer [and] Beelzebub [and] Judas Iscariot [and] Pontius Pilate [and] Herod [and] Caiaphas [and] Annas [and] Sanhedrin [and] Pharisees [and] Sadducees [and] Scribes [and] Elders [and] Priests [and] Levites [and] Deacons [and] Bishops [and] Archbishops [and] Cardinals [and] Popes [and] Antipopes [and] Saints [and] Martyrs [and] Confessors [and] Virgins [and] Widows [and] Doctors [and] Apostles [and] Evangelists [and] Disciples [and] Followers [and] Believers [and] Unbelievers [and] Sinners [and] Repentants [and] Penitents [and] Hypocrites [and] Liars [and] Thieves [and] Murderers [and] Rapists [and] Pedophiles [and] Homosexuals [and] Lesbians [and] Transvestites [and] Transsexuals [and] Bisexuals [and] Heterosexuals [and] Asexuals [and] Normal People [and] Abnormal People [and] Retarded People [and] Handicapped People [and] Blind People [and] Deaf People [and] Dumb People [and] Crippled People [and] Lame People [and] Paralyzed People [and] Quadriplegic People [and] Paraplegic People [and] Amputees [and] Burn Victims [and] Cancer Victims [and] Leukemia Victims [and] Aids Victims [and] Hiv Positive People [and] Drug Addicts [and] Drug Pushers [and] Drug Lords [and] Drug Users [and] Drug Abusers [and] Drug Dependents [and] Drug Withdrawal [and] Drug Rehabilitation [and] Drug Recovery [and] Drug Relapse [and] Drug Overdose [and] Drug Poisoning [and] Drug Addiction [and] Drug Trafficking [and] Drug Smuggling [and] Drug Manufacturing [and] Drug Laboratories [and] Drug Paraphernalia [and] Drug Needles [and] Drug Syringes [and] Drug Pipes [and] Drug Bongs [and] Drug Rolling Papers [and] Drug Cigarettes [and] Drug Joints [and] Drug Blunts [and] Drug Spliffs [and] Drug Cigars [and] Drug Pills [and] Drug Tablets [and] Drug Capsules [and] Drug Powder [and] Drug Crystals [and] Drug Rocks [and] Drug Liquid [and] Drug Gas [and] Drug Vapor [and] Drug Fumes [and] Drug Smoke [and] Drug Ash [and] Drug Residue [and] Drug Waste [and] Drug Garbage [and] Drug Trash [and] Drug Refuse [and] Drug Debris [and] Drug Rubbish [and] Drug Litter [and] Drug Junk [and] Drug Scrap [and] Drug Metal [and] Drug Iron [and] Drug Steel [and] Drug Aluminum [and] Drug Copper [and] Drug Brass [and] Drug Bronze [and] Drug Nickel [and] Drug Silver [and] Drug Gold [and] Drug Platinum [and] Drug Diamond [and] Drug Ruby [and] Drug Emerald [and] Drug Sapphire [and] Drug Topaz [and] Drug Opal [and] Drug Pearl [and] Drug Coral [and] Drug Amber [and] Drug Jade [and] Drug Ivory [and] Drug Bone [and] Drug Horn [and] Drug Hoof [and] Drug Fur [and] Drug Hair [and] Drug Skin [and] Drug Leather [and] Drug Wool [and] Drug Cotton [and] Drug Linen [and] Drug Silk [and] Drug Nylon [and] Drug Polyester [and] Drug Rayon [and] Drug Acrylic [and] Drug Spandex [and] Drug Lycra [and] Drug Velcro [and] Drug Zipper [and] Drug Button [and] Drug Snap [and] Drug Hook [and] Drug Eye [and] Drug Lace [and] Drug Shoelace [and] Drug Boot [and] Drug Shoe [and] Drug Sandal [and] Drug Slipper [and] Drug Flip-flop [and] Drug Sock [and] Drug Stocking [and] Drug Garter [and] Drug Belt [and] Drug Suspender [and] Drug Pants [and] Drug Shorts [and] Drug Underwear [and] Drug Bra [and] Drug Shirt [and] Drug T-shirt [and] Drug Polo [and] Drug Jacket [and] Drug Coat [and] Drug Sweater [and] Drug Vest [and] Drug Tie [and] Drug Scarf [and] Drug Hat [and] Drug Cap [and] Drug Helmet [and] Drug Glasses [and] Drug Goggles [and] Drug Contact Lens [and] Drug Mask [and] Drug Gloves [and] Drug Mittens [and] Drug Watch [and] Drug Clock [and] Drug Ring [and] Drug Bracelet [and] Drug Necklace [and] Drug Earring [and] Drug Pendant [and] Drug Brooch [and] Drug Cufflink [and] Drug Tiepin [and] Drug Wallet [and] Drug Purse [and] Drug Bag [and] Drug Backpack [and] Drug Suitcase [and] Drug Luggage [and] Drug Trunk [and] Drug Box [and] Drug Container [and] Drug Package [and] Drug Parcel [and] Drug Envelope [and] Drug Letter [and] Drug Postcard [and] Drug Stamp [and] Drug Mail [and] Drug Post Office [and] Drug Mailbox [and] Drug Postman [and] Drug Postwoman [and] Drug Postperson [and] Drug Courier [and] Drug Delivery [and] Drug Shipment [and] Drug Transport [and] Drug Truck [and] Drug Van [and] Drug Car [and] Drug Bus [and] Drug Jeepney [and] Drug Taxi [and] Drug Motorcycle [and] Drug Bicycle [and] Drug Tricycle [and] Drug Pedicab [and] Drug Rickshaw [and] Drug Boat [and] Drug Ship [and] Drug Yacht [and] Drug Submarine [and] Drug Airplane [and] Drug Helicopter [and] Drug Rocket [and] Drug Spaceship [and] Drug Alien [and] Drug Ufo [and] Drug Extraterrestrial [and] Drug Earth [and] Drug Moon [and] Drug Sun [and] Drug Star [and] Drug Galaxy [and] Drug Universe [and] Drug Infinity [and] Drug

Reyes outlasts Orcollo for 4th straight victory

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA—FILIPINO HALL OF Famer Efren "Bata" Reyes cruised back to a quarterfinal berth in the Tour Stop 9-Ball Championship at the Riviera Hotel and Casino in this gambling mecca.

With his hands steady in a row, the 53-year-old Reyes forged a clash with Poland's A. Szulakowski who pulled off a stellar 13-8 win against Ismael Orcollo of Japan.

Reyes, already the winner of the $75 leg of the All 9-Ball Shoot-out in Florida, last December, the Derby City Classic in Kentucky last January and the richest leg of the 2006 San Miguel Asian 9-ball Tour in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, recently, is the only other Filipino left in the dwindling ranks of the winners' bracket.

Joss "Venom" Jopia, the Philippines' finest player in the 1980s before migrating to the US, is scheduled to face Johnny "The Scorpion" Archer of the US in the winners' side Thursday.

Should he battle Szulakowski, Reyes will face the winner between Darel Bouquet of Germany and Corey Deuel of the United States on Thursday.

The Americans posted back-to-back wins over Nick Feijen of the Netherlands, 11-5, and Filipino Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat, 11-7, Wednesday.

Sarwat Sandiqian became the latest Filipino to be ousted from the tourney that offers $250,000 to the champion and $10,000 to the runner-up.

Sandiqian took his second defeat at the hands of Ceulo Delijk, 11-3, in the losers' bracket.

Delijk next faces Fumiaki Tomitagawa of Mexico who signed Masaki Tanaka of Japan, 11-9. The winners will clash with Orcollo.

Luat will battle the winner between Marcus Chamat of Sweden and Rubio Shirod of Italy.

If Reyes wins, he will collide with the winner between Thorsten Hohmann of Germany and Charlie Williams Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

STILL IN WINNERS' BOW Efren "Bata" Reyes

TM-ABAP stint in Guagua, Pampanga

THE BIGGEST NAMES IN THE PHILIPPINE bowling team aren their wares as the Youth Mobile-ABAP Go for Gold bowlga to set to Plaza Burgos in Guagua, Pampanga, today.

Olympians Harry Tabanero and Nabbie Pada banner a star-studded cast composed of gold medalists in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

"Expect non-stop action from the first bout up to the final bout," said Abap president Manny T. Lopez, who thanked Mayor Eduardo Rivera and Councilor Richard Mercado for their support.

Sponsored by Touch Mobile and supported by Pacific Heights, the TM Go for Gold is the country's first nationwide bowling invitational.

SPORTS

2 RP-Korea finals cap NTCC today

By Joey Arnaiz

GEN. TRIAS, CAVITE—IT'S ALREADY MIND-BOGGLING FOR SOMEDAY, LIKE Yeomie de Jesus to have reached a single-digit handicap in just 18 months of playing golf. Winning the National Tournament of Club Champions will make him feel like a magician.

Ordering great odds, De Jesus of Tagaytay Highlands put himself on the brink of a major victory when he edged Cebu's Vicks of Valley on the last hole to arrange a showdown with dreaded Korean Nick Jungwon of Eastridge for the men's division crown at the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club course.

The 27-year-old Bak, whose family has been in on one of the country since he was 8, recovered from a sluggish start to dominate Edmund Tee of Manila Southwoods in the back nine and secure a 4&3 victory for a place in the final of the tourney co-promoted by Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. and Inquirer Golf.

Runner-Korean Yu-seol of Eagle Ridge threatened to make it an all-Korean affair by holding off Kathleen Uy of Cebu Country Club for a 2&1 win in the ladies division semifinals.

Even meets Helen Grebo representing Alabang and Sta. Elena in the final. Grebo, making good her promise to reach the title duel after a heartbreaking loss to the

GOOD! DE JESUS

semifinal rival, outdueled young Lyra Ardeguere, ARG, in a duel the youngster was expected to win.

The 18-hole finals starts at 8 a.m. with the protagonist returning to the fields scene after going through the rigors of the Dec. Aski and yesterday at the Norman side of the country's biggest golf complex.

Sponsors of the NTCC are Sta. Lucia Realty, Callaway as the official apparel, Isuzu the official vehicle, Titleist the official ball, PRC the official caterer, Cleina Bright, The Travel Outcard Pacific as Media, Phoenix, the Tee locally assembled golf cart, a hole-in-one sponsor.

The winners today will get the chance to witness next week's RSNC sponsored events in England and the United States while the losers settle for a choice of a premium driver plus a trip for two to any local destination. All players had earlier won other

Gibson hopes to end slump at RP Open

KUALA LUMPUR—CANADIAN VETERAN Rick Gibson hopes to finally return to Mark Mark Golf and Country Club for next week's Philippine Open, would end his current slump in form.

The 44-year-old veteran, who has been in Manila for the past 17 years, was the winner at Mark Mark's debut Jan. course when the Philippine Open was last staged there in 2002.

A week before the Open's 50th edition, Gibson is pushing hard for history to repeat itself.

Four years ago, he entered the Open following a three-year hiatus but came out on top of the heap with a four-stroke victory at Mark Mark.

It was the second win that he was looking for in an illustrious career that includes titles other Asian and Japan, as well as in Canada.

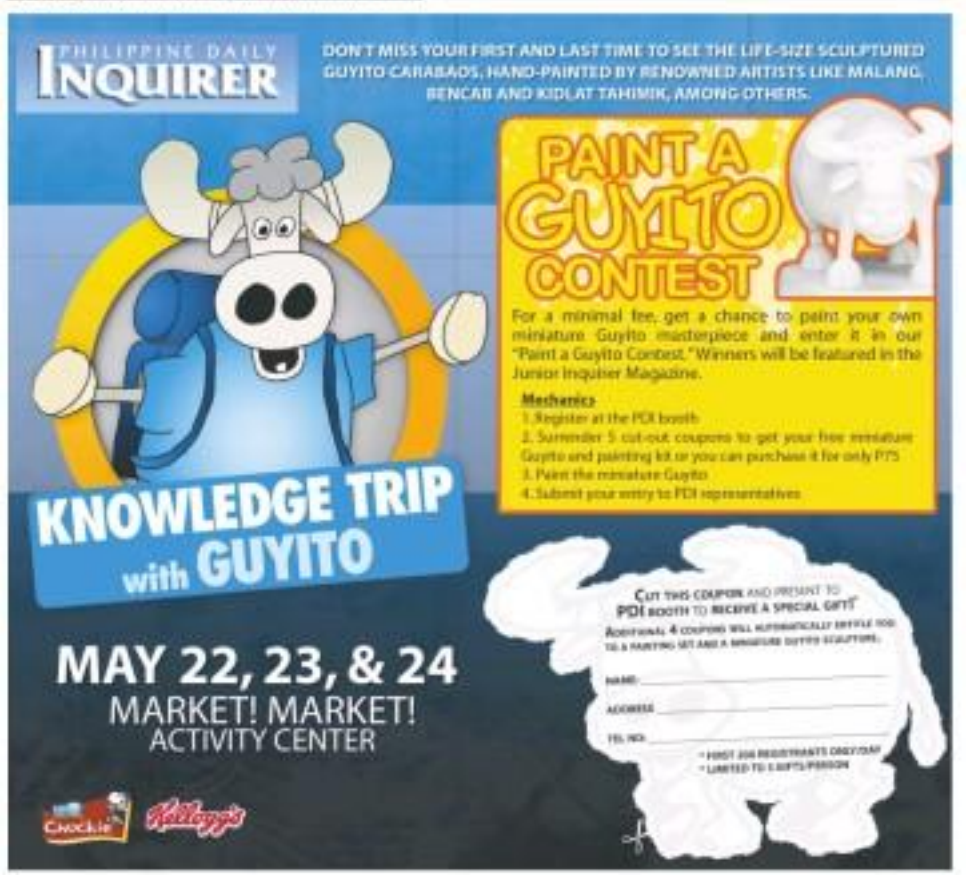
But he has made only three cuts from 16 tournaments this season.

Australian Adam Le Vesconte will defend his title next week. The top 10 players will also be eligible for the title defense: Jaspreet Jhar, Gerald Rondon, Arnie Degamone and Riley Casas.

Three will not be any sales of tickets at the Philippine Open and spectators are welcomed to attend the 50th edition of the Championships.

The Asian Tour will also be producing a special two-hour highlights package of the event which will be shown across the region via ESPN StarSports.

GIBSON Looking for second wind



BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Stocks post biggest single-day loss in 5 years

Heavy losses on Wall Street spark selling spree

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 3.44-PERCENT LOWER YESTERDAY, falling sharply in line with the region after the latest US inflation scare sparked heavy losses on Wall Street overnight, dealers said.

They said the markets have been very volatile over the past several days as opinion on the outlook for US interest rates has veered dramatically with every bit of bad data.

As the latest blow, stocks have made sustained gains in recent months, taking the bourse to new seven-year highs to give investors plenty of room for profit-taking.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index shed 84.83 points at 2,370.34 after trading between 2,368.83 and 2,463.37 points. This was its biggest single-day loss since Jan. 17, 2001, when it shed 93.36 points.

Volume was 2.74 billion shares worth P2.39 billion.

Declines led gains 100 to 9, with 30 stocks unchanged.

"It's a knee-jerk reaction to Wall Street's disappointing performance," said Ameet Jaggi of Meridian Global Eq.

SYNOPSIS B2

Peso weakens to 52.595 to $1

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY WEAKENED TO A new four-month low of 52.595 against the dollar, spooked by prospects of further interest rate increases by the US Federal Reserve, currency dealers said.

The local currency shed 53.08 centavos from Wednesday's closing of 52.06 at the Philippine fending System. It slid throughout the day after opening at an intra-day high of 52.33 $1 as foreign exchange inflows failed to stop with intensified corporate demand.

Roland Arnaiz, treasurer at Chinatrust Commercial Bank, said: "There was really great requirement for the US dollars and there's not enough supply."

"The CPI [consumer price index] report which came out in the US was quite scary. It might signal further upward movements in short-term interest rates by the US Fed," Arnaiz said.

It was earlier expected that the monetary tightening in the world's largest economy was at its end.

Arnaiz added that many currency traders were short on dollars since the last two months of 2005 when the peso was sharply gaining and were thus prompted to cover their positions now by buying dollars.

Demand from oil companies was likewise boosting corporate demand for dollars, he said.

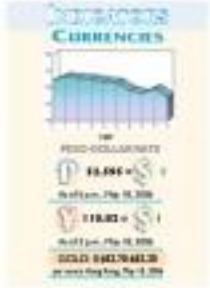
Over the last few days, the peso had been battered by strong demand for dollars ahead of the import season in the third quarter. At the same time, inflows from overseas Filipino workers had ceased in much earlier than the usual April-May influx, traders said.

Strong OFW remittances, improved credit ratings in the government's fiscal scheme and dissipating political noise pushed the peso up from the 54 levels last year, ending 2005 at 53.09 against the dollar.

Jonathan Ravelas, chief strategist at Banco de Oro Universal Bank, said the peso was being supported by strong portfolio flows into the capital markets and expectations of a possible sovereign credit upgrade as early as the fourth quarter or early 2007.

He projected that the peso would trade between a high of 50.50 and a low of 54 against the US dollar, averaging at 53.50 and starting at 52.81 by year's end.

Ravelas said he expected the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to tighten its overnight rates further this year, after raising key overnight policy rates by a total of 75 basis points and hiking the reserve requirement by 2 percentage points last year.



WHAT'S INSIDE

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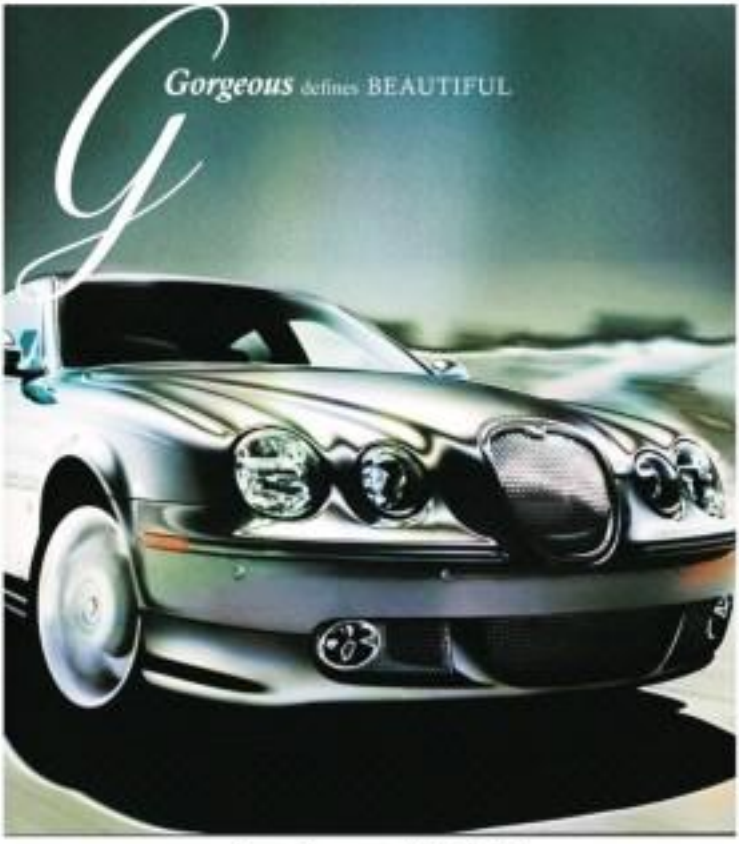
NDC to float 7-year peso bonds to raise P10B B2

PSE reports 61.3% rise in net foreign buying B7



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NDC to float 7-year peso bonds to raise ₱10B

By Doris C. Dumlao

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORP. will issue P10 billion in long-term peso bonds that must be used to finance the government's infrastructure spending, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said yesterday.

Neri told reporters that proceeds from the bond flotation, the first tranche of a P20-billion planned issuance for this year, would be used to augment funds for irrigation. He said the bonds would carry a maturity of at least seven years.

He said the government was hoping to increase its infrastructure spending by 35 percent this year.

Neri said proceeds of the float would help the government in its pump-priming efforts.

He noted that the delay in the enactment of the 2006 budget, for instance, could tell tale on the economy's economic growth performance.

Gov't planning to use funds for infrastructure projects

"It could have an impact because the government will not be spending as much as we'd like to," Neri said.

However, he said the Senate had committed to pass the budget bill this week and elevate the appropriations act to the House and conference committee next week.

The government plans to spend an additional P35-billion to boost the economy this year. The funds will come from P20 billion worth of savings in the 2005 budget, local government funds and the NDC bond float, bloated during earlier said.

Among the projects to be funded are roads and irrigation works that would make available two million hectares of land for agriculture.

In a recent study, the World Bank warned that infrastructure development in the Philippines was lagging behind population growth and rapid urbanization, causing bottlenecks that could harm the country's competitiveness and poverty-reduction efforts.

WB country director Joachim von Amsberg cited findings from the bank's core report "Philippines: Meeting Infrastructure Challenges" and urged the government to take advantage of its fiscal progress to beef up infrastructure spending.

The study indicated that critical sectors as spearheaded by the government to promote private sector participation and power sector restructuring were among the most progressive in Asia. However, progress in infrastructure has not kept up with population explosion and urbanization, thereby, ensures that growth and poverty reduction targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, may be at risk.

Over the next five years, Von Amsberg said the Philippines would need to gradually shore up infrastructure investments from less than 3 percent to at least 5 percent of gross domestic product, the average spending level needed for East Asia middle-income countries.

He said improved efficiency of infrastructure spending in the Philippines would ease infrastructure bottlenecks.

Von Amsberg said: "The Philippines' ongoing fiscal turnaround and strong revenue collection in recent months can set in motion a virtuous circle of improved public finances, better public services and growth, more employment and jobs, and more rapid social progress and poverty reduction."

Proposed Lafayette test run backed

By Bernard W. Dominguez

LAFAYETTE OVERSEAS INC., whose mining operations in Albay was shutdown last year after tailings spilled and contaminated water resources in the area, should be given another chance to prove that it had done well in addressing the problem, according to the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines.

CMP president Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez yesterday urged the government to allow Lafayette's Rapu-Rapu project to restart operations but under probation.

"This is only until such time that Lafayette has shown that it had complied with all the requirements and recommendations that the government may (demand), whatever those may be," Romualdez said.

In a preparedness assessment, CMP recommend that an independent team of mining experts commissioned in November to look into the mine spills found that Lafayette "has substantially complied with the recommended requirements and manifests its preparedness for the necessary test runs."

The test runs would be done as soon as the Pollution Adjudication Board issues a temporary lifting of the cease and desist order on the Rapu-Rapu project.

CMP said the probe team's findings highlighted the importance of monitoring closely the firm's operations to ensure that capacity usage would increase progressively.

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Bancommerce to help set up bank in Africa

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF Equatorial Guinea announced that it had entered into a partnership with the Philippines' Bank of Commerce (Bancommerce) to set up the national bank in that oil-producing nation in Central Africa.

The African bank, to be named Banco Nacional de Guinea Equatorial (Bange) has the Equatorial Guinean government as its main stockholder with a 45 percent interest. Bancommerce took up 30 percent of the capital.

In a statement, Bancommerce said it saw opportunities and potential in Bange, especially in the area of servicing overseas Filipino workers in that region. There are foreign-owned call centers operating in that country employing Filipino workers.

Equatorial Guinea Minister of Finance and Budget Marcelino Oyono Ela, in an official statement, said the bank would have an initial capital of 3 million euros. Private corporations and individual investors in Guinea have taken up 25 percent of the equity.

During a meeting of the Parliament of equatorial Guinea, Ela said Bancommerce, aside from being an equity partner in the bank, was also engaged as a technical adviser of the bank.

Last year, 71 Guinean from Equatorial Guinea underwent a comprehensive training program in different areas of banking at the Bancommerce head office in Makati.

Bancommerce's participation in this venture was authorized by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Release of ₱540M to employees of Napocor OKd

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR OF NEGOTIAtions, the Office of the Solicitor General has finally allowed the management of National Power Corp. to release some P540 million to employees as increases that had been placed in escrow.

The release of the funds, however, is subject to three conditions, Solicitor General Antonio Eduardo Nachura told Napocor president Cyril del Callar in a letter.

The first condition is that the amount to be released should be the full and final settlement of the step increment claims of the Napocor Employees Consolidated Union (Necu) and all other concerned employees.

Another condition is that the release of the P540 million "should constitute a waiver of all affected claims by the Necu and all concerned employees for the payment of step increments."

The last is that the amount should be paid directly to concerned Napocor employees.

Step increments are basic salary adjustments given to employees every so many years of satisfactory service to the public sector.

The funds placed in escrow involved the amount of salary adjustments claimed by Napocor employees when the same firm was reorganized in 2003.

LIC at EPCIB

THE MEDIA SPIEL MAY HAVE quieted down, but a low intensity conflict is still being waged in Equitable PCIBank preparatory to the next week's stockholders' meeting.

A proxy campaign is underway between the camps of vice chairwoman Ayala and Nathaniel Martin Hernandez, with both groups working to add more board seats for each of them to Bendix's chairman.

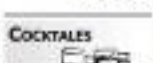
In addition to the BF Group's presence this number represents one in the board, Ayala nominated her brother Hadley Gomez Trade Undersecretary Gregory Domingo, Old Investments chief finance officer Jose Sio, and Highlands Prime president Antonio Moreno to join her in the 15-member bank board.

Hernandez, despite his 8 percent shareholdings not being enough to obtain a second board seat, nevertheless nominated his brother, Bonpart Corp. president Benjamin Philip, and two Equitable lawyers for the Tuesday meeting.

According to the grapevine, the BF Group is also supporting the nomination of retired Bangko Sentral Governor Alberto Reyes for independent director, and is dredge incumbent Anthony To, who is said to be a Hernandez ally.

Despite their boardroom differences, Ayala and Hernandez seem to present an amicable reward each other in public, especially when among the bank staff. According to the grapevine, the BSP lenient and Hernandez even took together a recent Asian trip.

Cocktales



Victor C. Agustin

A flight to Baguio City to attend the bank's planning conference.

Unable to land because of bumpy cloud, the flight had to turn back to Manila, where she was lifted a Lucio Tan helicopter and promptly flew back to the City of Pines, risk time or accuracy.

Burlesk apology

PCCSE Minority Leader Prospero Nograles is walking tall these days, after the tabled Atienzo and to cancel whatever Tondo offered as unequivocal apology to the Davao City congressman over the tabloids' "Burlesk King" stamps.

The tabloids were so town to claim that a naked Nograles had been caught on video with an ABS-CBN host in a five-star hotel in Manila by no less than the politicians' backend of the TV personality.

The two Tagalog tabloids, owned by Malaya publisher Jake Maciasat, later on admitted that no such video footage exists.

Apologizing to the respective families, the tabloids on Wednesday added that the Davao City congressman and the bi-cadastre were not beaten after all, as had been broadly insinuated by the series.

As a result of the embarrassing stories, the broadcaster had to leave ABS-CBN under a cloud of doubt.

Money-go-round

● RENATO Corona will turn just 58 this October, but already the Supreme Court justice had to be transported out of the Quezon airport terminal in a wheel chair during a visit to the island earlier this week.

● A TCP San Miguel Corp. official has commissioned one of his cutsis PR agents to plant negative column items against SOL blaming the audit firm and its foreign partner, Ernst and Young, for allegedly having botched San Miguel's hybrid bond issue.

Heard through the grapevine

UNC society magazine editor is manly and sweetly-gummed Ian Inso-Sotto says the reason he is forced to in Monday's item as saying he landlord two years of back rent for his apartment earlier in Makati. Apparently, Soto's financial predicament is quite known among the industry players.

(Heard: cocktales_pdi@philstar.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Stocks post biggest single-day loss in 5 years

Home page B1

...related Story...

Wall Street shares took a dive Wednesday after a better-than-expected report on US inflation ignited investor fears about higher interest rates.

American stocks wiped out $64 billion in market value from the 30 companies that make up the Dow Industrial average index, giving the blue-chip average its biggest one-day point drop in three years.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average number) 140.21 points (1.4 percent) to 11,209.66 while the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite slumped 29.39 points (1.33 percent) to 2,190.54.

The broad-market Standard and Poor's 500 index retreated 16.90 points (1.35 percent) to 1,271.10.

Ahead of the market opening, the Labor Department reported that consumer prices increased a larger than-expected 0.4 percent in April, led by higher energy prices. The core consumer price index (CPI), which excludes food and energy, increased 0.3 percent, also slightly higher than expected.

"The CPI numbers seemed to have really shaken up people," said John Previll, senior vice president and portfolio manager at Independence Investments. "The fear is that the Fed may have overpaid and that the Fed is going to have to keep raising rates longer than they expected."

Significantly, the data showed core inflation is now at the top end of the Fed's comfort zone of a 2 percent to annual pace. The annual limit has raised short-term interest rates 15 times in a row over the past two years in a bid to shake off inflationary pressures in the economy. AFP

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BUSINESS Friday

Business Features Editor Margie Quiogue-Espino

Market research helps build brands

Benefits of knowing market well outweigh cost of conducting study

ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN ARANETA

By Karen V. de Asis
Contributor

NOT MANY FIRMS APPRECIATE the value of applied market research in selling and building brands. Many believe that it is an expensive exercise, and merely tells them what they already know.

In many cases, the research outcome may not be satisfying, due largely to gaps in the preparation of the market research brief.

The quality of the research depends largely on how well the research briefing was conducted and how the mandates and agreements before the primal research progressed.

The old adage "garbage in, garbage out" largely applies in this case.

What makes a research brief?

At least seven critical elements must be present in any research brief.

These are the research background, research objectives, respondent's profile or potential target market, methodology, sample size, timing and budget.

The details of the brief may vary depending on the discussion between the research agency and the client.

At the onset, the marketer must be clear on the use of a particular research methodology and the expected results.

Research background. Provides an overview of the company and/or brand and the scenario leading to the need to conduct research.

Research objectives. Define and list the reasons for conducting research. Likewise, define the learning parameters and what the marketer expects to know from the entire research process.

Respondent profile. Describes the potential target market and/or respondent group. This includes the demographic, socioeconomic and psychographic information, if available.

Research methodology. Describes the preferred methodology for achieving insights. The brief should clearly define the preferred method; nonetheless, in a discussion between the marketer and agency, the methodology may be retained or changed.

Sample size. This refers to the number of people, called respondents, who will be part of the research process. The actual number depends on the type of research that will be executed i.e. whether qualitative or quantitative.

Qualitative tests require less number of respondents while quantitative tests must have a minimum number of respondents statistically acceptable to represent the universe being studied.

Timetable. The timetable defines when the client expects to get the results of the study. The agency and the client agree to a timetable that works backwards from the Go/No Go presentation date.

Budget. The client provides the agency with his budget. This may change depending on the outcome of the discussion of the research method and process.

How does research build brands?

Applied consumer market research is one of the most effective ways of meeting a brand to a certain direction.

There are different forms of consumer market research. Some of the more effective and commonly used methods include the focus group discussion (FGD), usage, attitude, image survey (UAIS), product placement test, advertising pre-test, retail audit and the customer satisfaction survey.

Focus group discussion. The focus group discussion is a qualitative study that allows deep interaction with a group of people, called respondents, who will be part of the research process. The actual number depends on the type of research that will be executed i.e. whether qualitative or quantitative.

While not statistically acceptable and data tends to be further validated by quantitative research, the insights, the results of the FGDs are often used to set the direction of the brand.

Depending on the respondent profile and details of the research study, FGDs may cost anywhere from P60,000 to P120,000 per group.

Usage, attitude, image survey. This type of quantitative survey is executed after a commercial airing of a brand campaign. Due to the high cost of advertising, it is often wise for brands using television as a major medium to have their advertising campaign tested before nationwide airing.

Reputable market research agencies have their own proprietary versions of the advertising pre-test. Nonetheless, the objectives for testing remain the same for all. These include determining the ability of the ad to rise above the media clutter or the advertising material's level of interest, ability to communicate the brand's value proposition, product benefit window and brand personality, ability of the ad to effectively motivate the target market to buy the brand.

Most creative ads engage the viewer. Unfortunately, a good number stop at this stage and fail to move the buyer to buy the product.

The advertising pre-test is a very effective tool in determining whether a brand's advertising is simply engaging or is truly highly effective in persuading the target market to buy the brand. Projects can cost from a low of P180,000 to a high of P400,000 depending on the sample.

Retail audit. This is an efficient way of determining what products fly off the store shelves, and how fast. While gross sales are usually the source of many firms in assessing the performance of the brand, consumer off-take nonetheless provides a more accurate description of the brand's performance in the market.

Depending on a company's inclination to the trade, sales tracking can happen where retail outlets area to volume purchase orders. Nonetheless, these orders can be sitting in the warehouse or in-store shelves.

On the other hand, a retail audit provides an accurate picture of the market's acceptance of a brand as the data reveals consumer movement from the store shelves.

Information that can be derived from retail audits include which SKU (unique or size is invariably being bought heavily, how many units are being moved out per store, per geographic area, etc. in a certain period. Some of the category and its brands performing well.

Retail audit costs vary based on the recency of the data and the category. The fee range from P150,000 to as much as P450,000.

Customer satisfaction survey. This survey provides an effective way to measure the level of satisfaction the consumer has about using the brand. Is the target market truly elated when using the brand, will he or she recommend the use of the brand, what did the consumer like or not like about the brand, etc.

Learning from this research tool can help the marketer institutionalize the consumer offer and process and improve on any deficiencies.

The costs of research can be substantial, indeed. But, this is small compared to the cost of a disastrous strategy or wrong brand direction.

One must also recognize that it is the client's expert use of research that will ultimately help build his brand.

(The author is a professor of Marketing and Brand Management at the De La Salle Professional Schools Graduate School of Business and is the director of Marketing Knowledge Center Training and Consultancy and can be reached at lchuan@dlsprof.net or www.marketnotes.com.)

GOINGS-ON

DOT sets bigger business mission to Japan

THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM IS SENDING A BIGGER DELEGATION FOR its business mission to Japan this month, the second since last year.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace H. Durano said the 33rd Philippine Business Mission (PBM) would be composed of 81 delegates representing a wider field of interests to enhance the mission's chances of attracting more investments, tourists and assistance.

"They will have one-on-one targeted meetings with executives and owners of reputable Japanese firms in Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka for investments, marketing tie-ups, joint ventures, and sales and supply contracts. A dedicated one-day four-hour business exchange between Philippine suppliers and Japanese buyers is also scheduled in Osaka on May 23, Nagoya on May 24 and Tokyo on May 26," Durano said.

With Philippine Airlines as a major sponsor, the 33rd PBM involves airlines and cruise ships, local government units (provincial, city and municipal), resorts and spas, travel agencies and tour operators, hotels and restaurants, health and wellness establishments, wholesalers and retail shops, and banks and investment institutions.

"Compared to the trip we had last year's agreements, the 33rd PBM will also open and initiate new ones, especially on investments in tourism facilities that will increase our current 15,000 room capacity, which is just enough to accommodate our target foreign arrivals of three million this year," Durano added.

The 33rd PBM, according to Durano, must also help ensure that this year's target of bringing 3 million foreign visitors will be attained. He said last year's 2,900 helped push the country's foreign arrivals for the full-year 2005 to 2.6 million, which even topped 2004's record 2.29 million, with Japan as a major source of tourists.

"This year's trend is more significant as it marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan since the ratification of the Peace Treaty and Reparations Agreement on July 23, 1956.

Since then, Japan has evolved to become the Philippines' second largest investor, trading partner and source of tourists, and largest donor of official development assistance.

Durano said the 33rd PBM would also reinforce the new self-established Premium Resort Islands/Philippines brand in Japan, support the new sub-campaign "Philippines: Wellness is on the Inside Out," point-5 flights exports, and promote the country's destinations to the 17-million-Japanese outbound market.

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The Tourism Trust Fund (TTF), members of the local tourism industry will gain bilateral government assistance in finding Japanese buyers of travel packages, investors in new projects, and partners for joint ventures or asset acquisitions, and other business linkages.

Japan is projected to account for over a million, or more than 20 percent, of the country's first-visitor target arrivals by 2010.

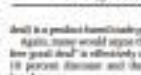
Learn candle- and soap-making

ABOUT 15 candles are slated for souvenirs and gifts because of their novelty and relaxing effect. Learn how to make these and more arts and crafts in the process.

In line with the government's objective to give livelihood to those who want to earn extra income, the Golden Treasure Skills Development Program will conduct a one-day seminar on soap-making to be held at the DFAP Alumni Center, Magsaysay Avenue, Diliman II, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Topics to be discussed are sourcing of materials and coating. Students will learn how to make liquid dishwashing soap, liquid hand soap, liquid all purpose soap, low detergent soap, herbal bath soap (papaya, watermelon, cucumber, oatmeal etc.), powder soap, fabric softener, car shampoo, bonus ingredients and supplements, and the final touch: attractive packaging ideas. Participants will be taught how to make soap molds and how to cut bulk soaps after the seminar. All materials will be provided. For questions, call (02) 426-28; (02) 920-20-34; 361-29-68; 436-76-25 and 913-01-11.

'Will price-cut promos damage our brand equity?'



Dr. Ned Roberto & Andy Roberto

Q: We attended a seminar where one of the speakers told us that price-driven promotions can damage brand equity. If this is true, why are so many companies doing it?

Then, when we relaxed the tension at the office and mentioned this warning, our general manager disagreed.

He is also the boss of the leading consumer companies, like P&G, Unilever and Colgate-Palmolive, that are still into price-based promos.

He asked: "Do you see the brand equity of Ariel, Safeguard, Scotch, or Palmolive Shampoo suffering?"

As if we source "the real score" from the available published studies on this issue, we will find different answers.

Some studies showed that a quick fix price-based promo adversely affected brand equity. But just as many studies showed no such adverse effect.

To answer your two questions, we'll source from both theory and practice.

Then, let's tap in you in choose which logic seems more applicable in your particular case and circumstance.

Your first question: "Is it true that price driven promos damage brand equity?"

What are price drivers, price-based promotions in the first place? And how does this differ from a product-based promo?

Promo advocates tell us that a "price-off" and a coupon are price-based consumer promos.

On the other hand, a bonus pack and a product sample are product-based consumer promos. You see examples of these promos in the supermarkets every day.

Many practitioners would of course argue that a bonus pack or a product sample is effectively function like a price-off or a coupon. They are "indirect" price-based promos. To make promotion, a trade discount is a price-based trade promo while a free good (as in a "1-plus-1" deal, that is, a "10 cans bought, 1 can free" deal) is a product-based trade promo.

Again, some would argue that a "10-plus-1 free good deal" is effectively an "indirectly" a 10 percent discount and therefore a price-based promo.

So as you can see, here's one reason why there's a continuing, raging unsettled debate about sales promotion.

There isn't even an agreement among practitioners about basic terms like what's a price-based versus a product-based promo.

If you trace the origin of the debate, you'll find that it's the ad agency people who resent retrial of the promo and its effect on brand equity.

The claim is that advertising builds brand values.

However, because promos are quick ways to induce brand switching, repeat purchase, or getting consumers to buy more or buy more, they often seem to be at the expense of brand image.

But what do studies show? Here are some of those studies' more insightful and helpful results.

Your category determines the risk

First, you have to consider the product category when your brand belongs.

If your brand is a consumer durable (say, a household appliance or a car), there's not much risk of its brand equity getting hurt by, for example, a sale price promo.

At the end of almost every year, when the next year's model is announced, leading car brands go on a sale price promo.

And that's been going on for years. But we understand that Honda's and Toyota's brand equity remain intact.

Next, consider the price segment your brand is in.

If it's in a premium segment and you get tempted and yield to the temptation to promote based on price, then something could happen.

One could think: "How can this brand of mine go down there in the price of an economy brand without sacrificing quality? It must now be lower in quality on some of the attributes. That's not my premium brand anymore."

In such a case, the price promotion erodes the premium brand's equity and image.

Then there are those who think that high-quality brands rarely go for promotional sales, if a premium brand does go on a promotion, then its quality must have been compromised.

Third, you need to also consider your brand's competitive status and current brand equity.

If your brand is a strong market leader with just as strong brand equity it's going to be less vulnerable to disorders in equity value.

Take Clorox, for example.

This brand is a strong leader brand in the premium bleaches segment (but not the total detergent market).

It also has an established strategic brand equity and value. When it went for price promotions, these did little or no damage to its brand equity.

The more recent cases have involved Jollibee and McDonald's.

Both are leading brands have been and are into one promo after another. There's no solid evidence that these promos hurt these brands' equity values.

We're out of space! We'll answer your second question on why companies still do price promos that are (may) likely to do damage to their brand equity next week.

Keep your questions coming. Send them to us at Marketing@pdi.ph, or we text us at 0919-234-3432. Chit Roa!

Migrants find Baguio vendor-friendly, study says

Cool weather, warm people a potent combination

BAGUIO CITY—THE PROLIFERATION of migrant vendors in this mountain resort city can be attributed to the vendors and the people's friendliness to vendors, a study by a Malaysian anthropology professor showed.

The study, which was presented in an hour-long video documentary entitled "Sidewalk Capitalism: Being a Street Vendor in Baguio City," was a product of a six-month research by Dr. Daniel Yeoh, a senior fellow of the Institut Public Intellectuals.

Aside from the cool weather, migrant vendors come here because it is a tourist area. Focus those I have interviewed from Abulunan who experienced pain and suffering, they sometimes land with no vendors because they saw that the city government was more tolerant of street vendors," Yeoh, an anthropology professor at the Monash University in Malaysia, said in the study presented at the University of the Philippines Baguio early this week.

Yeoh said the study aimed to get the street vendors' view on life based on their actual experiences.

Esther Garcing, vice president of the Abulan Traders Association here, said the economic crisis in Mindanao had pushed some of them to go to Baguio and other provinces in Luzon and earn a living as street vendors.

The study said 3,000 of the city's 260,000 residents are migrant vendors from Pangasinan, Mindanao and Cordillera provinces.

It said migrant vendors have also harassed their own associations to protect their welfare.

Yeoh said migrant vendors have either reached college or have earned their degrees. This, he said, only proved that even educated people venture into the underground economy because there are no available jobs after they finish college.

Yeoh said of the 60 street vendors whom he interviewed, he only chose 20 respondents for the actual documentary.

"These vendors are not exactly poor people but people with financial difficulty. There are those who reached college but also engaged in vending because they had an interest to support their education," he said.

The respondents said the city government's anti-demolition teams destroy their wares whenever the local anti-peddling law is implemented.

They said those caught are fined P1,000 and their products confiscated.

Jesusita Pinglawen, a fruit vendor who was interviewed in the study, said she suffered from miscarriage after policemen chased her.

"The police chased us and even beat us. I could not remember how many times I was punched because I was more concerned about how I was going to protect the fruits that I had to sell," she said.

"Because of the constant chasing, many women vendors suffered premature delivery," said Geraldine Cabe, former chair of Dimas-Eurkeng, a Baguio-based urban poor group.

Emmanuel Reyes, city public order service officer, said their teams had faced resistance from vendors, most of whom would rush their personnel.

"The vendors insist that it is their livelihood. I understand them, but there is a law. I understand that it's poverty which drives them to go to the streets and I think the national government should do something about it," he said. —Dodjie Cabuna, *PhilNorthern Luzon Bureau*

BAGUIO does not attract just tourists, but entrepreneurs as well.

Philippine National Bank

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of Stockholders of the Philippine National Bank will be held on May 30, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at the Ballroom, Upper Lobby, Century Park Hotel, 599 Pablo Ocampo Sr. St., Malate, Manila.

The Agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Secretary's Proof of Notice and Quorum
3. Approval of the Minutes of the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting held on May 24, 2005
4. Report of the President on the Results of Operations for the Year 2005
5. Approval of the 2005 Annual Report
6. Approval of the Amendment to the Amended By-Laws Transfer of the position, powers and duties of the Chairman of the Board in Sections 6.1 and 6.3, Article III captioned "Officers" to Section 9.4, Article V captioned "Board of Directors"
7. Ratification of All Acts, Resolutions and Proceedings of the Board of Directors and Corporate Officers since the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting
8. Election of Directors
9. Appointment of External Auditor
10. Other Matters
11. Adjournment

Minutes of the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting as well as resolutions of the Board of Directors from May 25, 2005 will be available for examination during office hours at the Office of the Corporate Secretary.

Only stockholders of record as of May 2, 2006 will be entitled to notice and vote at this meeting. Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m.

If you cannot personally attend the meeting, you may designate your authorized representative by submitting a PROXY to the Office of the Corporate Secretary no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 23, 2006. Any proxies so received will be validated on May 25, 2006, 8:30 a.m., at the Office of the Stock Transfer Agent at Allied Bank Center, 6754 Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

Pasay City, March 24, 2006

ATTY. O. FERNANDEZ
Corporate Secretary

NEVER HAS THIS SERVER BEEN SO REWARDING!

intel Xeon inside

Purchase this HP ProLiant Server ML150 G2 bundle, get a hard disk for free and get a chance to win exciting prizes in the raffle draw. HP ProLiant ML150 G2 Server's remarkable value is perfect for workgroups and smaller midsize businesses that need dependable server performance and trusted service and support. Powered by the latest Intel® Xeon® Processor which includes Intel® Extended Memory 64 Technology for faster performance, you can depend on it for most of your business needs. And now is the perfect time to experience the HP ProLiant ML150 G2's performance, manageability and scalability. From May 1 to June 30, 2006, you get a free hard disk for every purchase of this HP ProLiant ML150 G2 bundle. On top of that, you get a chance to win some exciting prizes in the raffle draw.

P108,000 HP PROLIANT ML150 G2

Intel Xeon® Processor (800 MHz/1MB/64-bit Extended Memory 64 Technology) 1GB (2 x 512MB) DDR2-400 ECC Registered SDRAM Max. Memory Capacity: 12GB Expansion Slots: 6 slots (2 PCI-Express x8 (x8 mech), 1 PCI-Express x4 (x4 mech), 1 PCI-X 133 MHz/64-bit, 2 PCI 33 MHz/32-bit) Hot-plug SAS HDD Support Max 2 Hot-plug SATA HDD Support Max 4 Hot-plug HDD Max Capacity: 1.2TB Embedded NC326i Dual Port PCI-E Gigabit NIC (w/failover) Embedded NC105i PCI-E Gigabit NIC Embedded Matrox G200 16MB SVGA Video Hot-plug redundant power supply

Tour for The I.T. Boys Promo Mechanics:
1. Purchase the HP ProLiant ML150 G2 Server Bundle and get a chance to win the following prizes in the Tours for the IT Boys raffle draw:
   1 x Sony PSP
   1 x iPOD Nano
   1 x HP Compaq nx9030 Notebook
2. To qualify, please email the following details to hp@bmworks.net : your name, company, address, contact numbers, email address, date of purchase, sales person and reseller name with copy of reseller invoice.
3. Once we have validated the information, your email will serve as your entry for the raffle.
4. All purchases for consideration in the raffle must be received by Bmworks by July 13, 2006.
5. Raffle draw shall be held at Bmworks, Inc. on July 30, 2006 in the presence of our HP representative.
6. Prizes are not convertible to cash.
7. Promotion offer is not valid with any other type of discounting and/or promotional offer.
8. For more information, please contact Joy Abes, Bmworks Inc. at phone number (02) 893-7873 to 75 / 751-2805 to 06

Get a chance to win the following prizes in the raffle draw when you purchase this HP ProLiant ML150 G2 bundle:

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or (632) 867-3557
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Philippine Stock Exchange

Disclosures

CHEMICAL Panabaons and Minerals Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 29, 9 a.m. at the Ballroom A & B, 4th floor, Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila, Quezon City. Stockholders of record as of May 30 are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.

***

GLOBE Power Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 31, 9:30 a.m. at the Manila Polo Club Inc., No. 17 Monterey Road, Forbes Park, Makati City.

***

LUCIO C. Tan, Marixeo Sawangdee, Wilson T. Young, Lucio K. Tan Jr., Michael G. Tan, Jammes L. Yu and Andrew C. Co have become stockholders of **Tandaan Holdings Inc.** during the corporation's stockholders' meetings on May 11. Meanwhile, Peter P. Cayard Carlos S. Mindaza were likewise elected as independent directors. *Compiled by Ador Padroza, PSE Research*

Metrobank posts 12.7% jump in 1st quarter profit

By Doris C. Dumlao

METROPOLITAN BANK & TRUST Company, the country's biggest bank, posted a 12.7 percent rise in consolidated first quarter net profit to P1.6 billion from a year ago.

Metrobank senior vice president Raymund Lapuz said the strong performance in the first three months was driven by increased consolidated interest income on loans, which improved 14.5 percent to P857 million.

While interest expenses rose 6.4 percent, he said this was due to more aggressive funds generation, which boosted consolidated deposit levels by P34 billion.

In particular, low-cost current account and savings account (Casa) funds increased by P6.9 billion in line with the bank's focus on bringing down its funding cost. This helped improve the bank's net interest margins while at the same time easing the pressure on competitiveness.

In a disclosure to the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Metrobank group said its other income generated from exchange profits, commissions, trading and investment securities gains surged by 47.5 percent or P1.4 billion from last year's P3 billion.

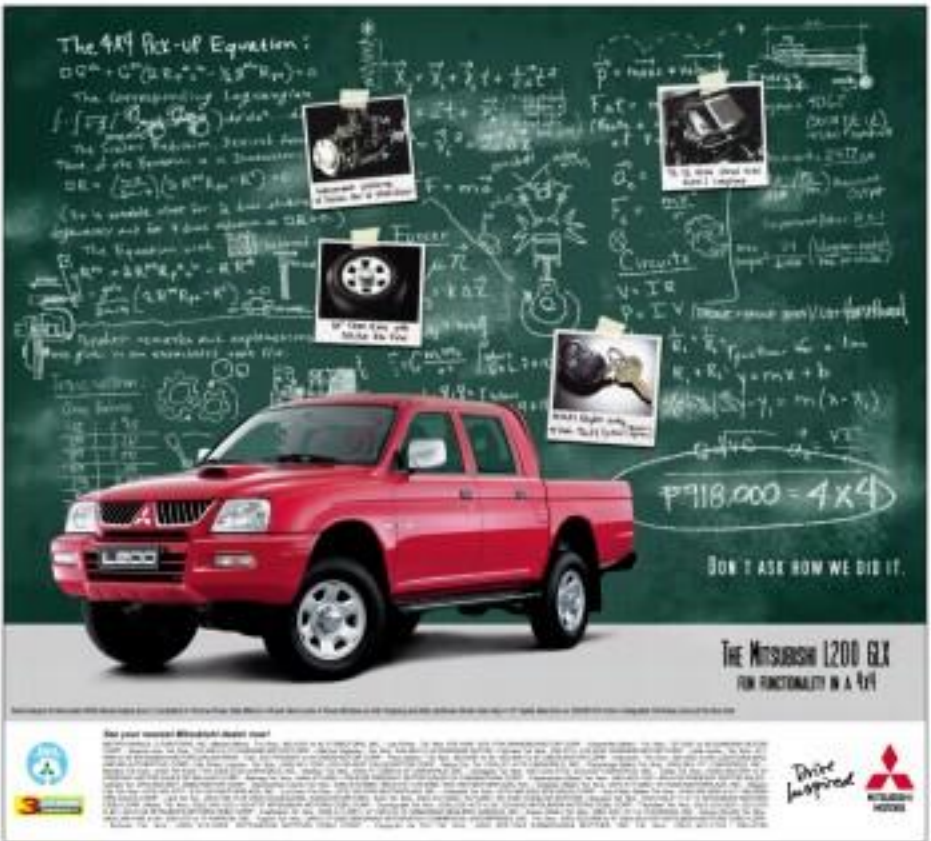
The group's treasury operations generated higher trading and foreign exchange gains during the period.

Lapuz said continued investor preference for the bank's various trust products also enabled its trust business to contribute to the income growth.

Total assets under management reached P387 billion for the first quarter. Capital funds of the group, which includes thrift bank unit Philippine Savings Bank and investment house First Metro Investment Corp., stood at P74.6 billion, 11.3 percent higher than the P67.5 billion in the same period last year.

Currencies

May 18, 2006 country	unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.78552	1.00000	52.3000
Japan	Yen	0.00665	0.00847	0.4430
United Kingdom	Pound	1.47466	1.87800	98.2387
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.10118	0.12885	6.7400
Switzerland	Franc	0.62332	0.79377	41.5200
Canada	Dollar	0.71202	0.90671	47.4200
Singapore	Dollar	0.49870	0.63510	33.2200
Australia	Dollar	0.60672	0.77273	40.4200
Norway	Krone	0.12810	0.16314	8.5300
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.20939	0.26664	13.9467
Sweden	Krona	0.11111	0.14151	7.4000
Denmark	Krone	0.14481	0.18444	9.6433
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.00007	0.00011	0.0061
Thailand	Baht	0.01923	0.02449	1.2808
Kuwait	Dinar	2.71186	3.45345	180.6000
UAE	Dirham	0.21382	0.27234	14.2400
Qatar	Qatar	0.21572	0.27476	14.3667
Taiwan	Dollar	0.02408	0.03067	1.6033
Brazil	Real	0.36232	0.46140	24.1300
Denmark	Krone	0.14481	0.18444	9.6433
India	Rupee	0.01745	0.02223	1.1625
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.20619	0.26258	13.7300
Mexico	Peso	0.07252	0.09237	4.8300
New Zealand	Dollar	0.54926	0.69954	36.5800
South Africa	Rand	0.12772	0.16266	8.5067
China	Yuan	0.09722	0.12382	6.4750
Korea	W Dollar	0.00083	0.00106	0.0555



Forgetting the small farmer

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

"BUDGET TO WIT" THIS MAY PILL IN THE hands of the Alyansa Agribuhayan, the largest farmer-fisherfolk coalition today. Since its founding on Jan. 23, 2003, it has fully supported the Department of Agriculture's efforts in doing so get the P53-billion annual budget legally mandated by the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (Afma). Unfortunately, the DA has been getting less than P16 billion a year.

The Afma was also backed by 38 in opposing a non-level global playing field through less rapid liberalization. This is because developed countries have not meaningfully decreased their massive agricultural subsidies, while rapidly developing countries with minimal subsidies like ours are immediately implement sudden and deep tariff reductions.

Last May 16, the Legislative and Executive Development Advisory Council met to discuss 11 priority measures up for discussion in the 13th session days remaining before Congress goes on recess in June. Sen. Richard Gordon said, "I think realistically maybe about four measures should be passed." We hope the small farmer is not forgotten by ignoring the fisherfolk bill.

Biofuels bill

Last November 2005, the House of Representatives approved the Biofuels Act of 2005, mandating the use of bioethanol as ethyl alcohol as transport fuel. If this measure is given priority, principal author Bohinon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri said: "We will boost employment in the countryside to 500,000 new farm workers and an estimated 1 million orchard plant employees spread across the nation."

Other benefits are foreign exchange savings of $825 million over a 10-year period, a guaranteed demand of an average of 300 million liters of ethanol annually, and because it is a clean fuel, billions of pesos in savings from medical costs and local taxes due to pollution.

The table above shows our dangerous 96 percent dependence on imported oil.

Our net oil imports are increasing. Since these are mostly food fuels that are not sustainable, supply will increasingly get scarcer with the consequent further skyrocketing of prices.

With our own unmolested land biofuels, we can have oil security in addition to food security. We have more than enough means to produce the necessary raw materials for alternative fuels: 2.4 million hectares of corn, 1.3 million hectares of coconut, 300,000 hectares of sugar cane and 250,000 hectares of cassava and camote. This will more added income to our farmers.

Improvements needed

However, an amendment is needed so that the small farmers is not forgotten. In the bill's current version, there is a National Biofuels Board that will supervise the implementation of the biofuel national strategy. Of the 13 board members, four are from the private sector. They are "from the feed stock producers in bioethanol, distillery industry, petroleum industry, and automobile manufacturer." Not one comes from the farmer sector, which provides the necessary raw materials. It is imperative that farmer interests and insights be represented in this board.

We must also institute a paradigm in our current development orientation. Today, we give our farmers little support, in isolation of the DA budget being less than half of what Afma mandates. We let our farmers with a double whammy by "un-liberalizing" even the WTO. Whereas the WTO allows us to average our maximum applied tariff of 20 percent, we insist on exposing our farmers to virtually free competition with a very low applied 3 percent tariff.

This economic suicide of Thailand's own small agriculture policy. They give their farmers a much larger agriculture budget. In addition, with the new WTO maximum tariff of 30 percent, they apply a much higher 29 percent agricultural tariff rate.

Other recommendations

To ensure our biofuel future does not assume the same sad fate as our agriculture, we must give it a tariff regime that will effectively protect our new biofuel industry. More importantly, we should provide the farmers with the budget and support services necessary to be globally competitive. Otherwise, we will be imposing our raw materials. Our 300,000 farm jobs will be lost. Even our promising jobs may be lost because of downward global competitiveness resulting from seasonal local supply.

The private sector can also initiate its own improvements. For example, cassava pasil's sharing mechanisms can be instituted in the form of projects such as small hauling schemes and outright grants.

If the small farmers is not forgotten by Congress in the next few days by hopefully passing the biofuels bill, and if the farmers is acknowledged by the government and the private sector as not only a raw material supplier, but also a key partner in building the industry, then biofuels will indeed have a bright future.

(The author is Agrisearch chair for tropical coal supporters, email: agrisearch@yahoo.com or telefax 521-8116 ext. 103)

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPINE ENERGY SUPPLY MIX

	Local Production	Net Imports	Total
Crude Oil	4.7%	81.4%	86.1%
Oil Products		13.9%	13.9%
Crude Oil	4.7%	76.5%	81.1%
Oil Products		18.5%	18.9%

PSE reports 61.3% rise in net foreign buying

Solid proof of investors' confidence in the economy

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

NET FOREIGN BUYING IN THE stock market from January to April surged 61.3 percent to P19.3 billion from P12.09 billion a year ago as investor sentiment on the country's economic and political prospects improved, the Philippine Stock Exchange said yesterday.

Net foreign buying is the difference between total foreign buying and selling.

The PSE also said total foreign buying during the four months period rose 17.8 to P100.72 billion from year ago's P85.09 billion, outpacing the 11.4-percent increase in foreign selling to P81.25 billion from P81 billion last year.

Francis Lim, PSE president and chief executive officer, said the surge in foreign buying was a proof of investors' confidence in the economy and in the country's political stability.

"Gains from latest political bickering has subsided, and the lack of unnecessary distractions from the political arena has helped investors focus on good news from the economic and corporate front," Lim explained.

The stock market earlier recorded hefty gains but posted a steep 84.8-point drop yesterday to 2,278.74, its biggest drop in points since Jan. 17, 2001 when it shed 93 points.

The market dropped 3.4 percent yesterday, its sharpest decline since July 5 last year.

Local traders overheard the market's sharp fall to the Wall Street's more than 300-point plunge overnight after US interests were alarmed by a nearly 1 percent hike in April inflation.

Foreign selling yesterday amounted to P1.54 billion, higher than the buying of P978 million.

Despite yesterday's performance, Lim expects foreign buying to grow in the coming months.

On the average, the daily total foreign buying amounted to P487.75 million during the second week of April, P668.52 million in the third week of April and reached P1.3 billion at the end of the said month.

Lim also confirmed that foreigners sold on the average P427.6 million worth of stocks during the second week of April, P516.49 million on the following week and P1.34 billion on the last week of April.

After deducting the selling orders, daily net foreign buying averaged P68.21 million, P372.04 million and P1,57.75 million during the respective weeks in comparison.

Lim said net foreign buying dropped in the last week of April as an offshoot of the heavy selling on April 28, when foreigners sold P1.71 billion worth of stocks.

VAT collection bits P16.1B

By Michelle V. Baron

THE GOVERNMENT RAISED P16.1 BILLION in added-value revenue through the Reformed VAT Law (RVAT) in the first quarter, the Department of Finance said yesterday.

In a statement, the DOF said the amount of RVAT collection in the first three months of the year was about 6 percent higher than the target of P15.3 billion.

This, the DOF said, meant the government was on track to meeting the P53-billion full-year incremental revenue target of the government.

Of the total RVAT collections in the first quarter, P6.1 billion was contributed by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), which slightly missed its target of P6.4 billion.

The shortfall of the BIR, however, was compensated by the over-performance of the Bureau of Customs. The DOF said the BOC collected P11 billion in additional revenue from the RVAT, higher than its target of P1.2 billion.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said in a statement that the higher than-programmed RVAT collection by the BOC was attributed to the increase in oil prices. The higher the prices of oil, the higher the amount of tariff collection, he explained.

The BIR failed to meet its RVAT collection target but the finance official said the agency was expected to catch up in the coming months.

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ARRIVED NOTICE

Emerson Network Power's Heritage of Business Critical Continuity Products extends to SOHO applications

Throughout its history Emerson Network Power through the Liebert brand, has pioneered power, cooling and monitoring protection systems for mission-critical applications in the data centers of global enterprises and organizations of all sizes. With more than 5,000 employees, 11 plants worldwide, 450 representatives and distributors, 700 customer engineers and 1,500 resellers, the company's depth and breadth has enabled it to re-achieve-hedged global leader in providing network availability and business continuity.

In the Philippines, Emerson Network Power has recently appointed Synergy Technologies Corporation for Liebert Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) and related products in the Philippines. Liebert's key role will be to distribute Liebert UPS widely across the Philippines, in that even the smallest SOHO desktop applications would have the benefits of being protected by a Liebert Solution.

"Liebert solutions are a critical economy issue for the SOHO market. Businesses and power facilities being real-time business operations to a standstill and can cost thousands to SOHOs, which rely heavily on cheap, easy accessory," said Gene Hayden, VP Sales & Marketing & Asia Pacific General Manager, Emerson Network Power. "With the growing susceptibility of business to downtime, caused by climatic and other unpredictable factors, UPS has become a necessity in the SOHO space."

The experience that Emerson Network Power brings to the SME market is one together by our extensive relationship with the global Fortune 500 companies. We protect 100% of the Fortune 500 and as much as 70% of the SME. SOHO capitalizes with "high 9's" superior technology. The true-online Liebert GXT UPS solutions for example is deployed to protect network servers, bridges, hubs, routers, storage devices and critical workstations with the high level of protection and availability to the network environment.

For information on the full Emerson Network Power Power Quality portfolio, please visit www.liebert.com or www.emersonnetworkpower.com or www.Liebert.com

BUSINESS

Indophil ups estimate of Tampakan reserves

By Christine A. Gaylican

INDOPHIL RESOURCES NL OF Australia has raised by one-third of the mineral reserves of the Tampakan copper-gold mine in Mindanao.

Indophil managing director Tony Robbins said from interview yesterday that the new mineral resource estimate placed copper reserves at 250,000 metric tons, up 32 percent from the initial estimates, while gold reserves were set at 330,000 ounces a year.

The revised figures were based on the results of feasibility studies and drilling done at the Tampakan mine involving the provinces of South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Davao del Sur.

"This increases the viability of the mine project, which requires more than a billion dollars to develop [mine production commences in 2013]," Robbins noted.

He added that the new mineral resource estimates would make Tampakan the biggest undeveloped copper field in Southeast Asia.

Indophil Resources Ltd., which is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange, has partnered with the Alsumsam Group's Alsons Development and Investment Corp. to develop the mine.

Another major investor is Xstrata Plc based in Switzerland.

Initial economic theses that the Tampakan reserves considered a world-class mine, has a great potential value of about $14 billion.

Recent signs by the prospects of the country's mineral industry and the government's "all-out" support to their operations, materialize among firm Indophil Resources NL said it was now considering expanding its mineral exploration projects in the Philippines.

Indophil is the smallest firm of the Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI), which is now conducting a pre-feasibility study on the copper and gold deposits at the boundaries of Tampakan in South Cotabato, Columbio in Sultan Kudarat and Kiblawan in Davao del Sur.

UBS says RP spending cuts not sustainable

Revenue generation better way to plug budget gap

By Michelle V Rama

INVESTMENT BANK UBS AG WARNED THE government that cutting back on expenditures was not the best way to solve its budget problem, adding that the fiscal performance in April was "disappointing."

In its assessment of the Philippines' fiscal status, UBS stressed that enhancing revenue generation was a much preferred way of improving the budget position.

Official statistics showed that the Tampakan reserves considered a world-class mine, has a great potential value of about $14 billion.

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"What happened in April was a tightening of government expenditures compromising for weak tax collection, UBS noted.

"With non-interest spending down to less than 12 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) in 2005, and infrastructure and social services in urgent need of upgrades, this [cutting expenditures] is not a sustainable source of further budget deficit reduction," the economist said.

"Non-interest spending" refers to money spent on budget items other than the payment of interest on government debts, such as capital outlays and basic services.

The Department of Finance earlier reported that the national government posted a P137.6-billion budget surplus in April, putting it closer to meeting the full-year deficit target of P135-billion from last year's P146.8 billion.

The surplus, the highest since 1998, was achieved despite the failure of the Bureau of Internal Revenue to meet its tax-collection target for the month.

Officials explained that the surplus was due to restrained spending.

Data showed that the government spent 28 percent less than the expenditure target for April.

This was despite earlier pronouncements from fiscal authorities that the government would adopt a pump-priming policy under which it should increase this over P1 billion in planned national budget for this year.

The government disbursed only P77.4 billion in April compared with the P183.3-billion program.

The expenditure in April was also 7 percent lower than the P82.3-billion spent during the same month last year.

UBS said a cornered government to be forced to keep a restrained spending in the coming months unless authorities see signs of SBI recovering from the April downfall.

The BIR, which accounts for about 60 percent of government revenues, collected only P71.2 billion during the month compared with its P78.6-billion target.

But Finance Secretary Margarito Teves had said that the government was still keen on meeting its program-mined capital outlay spending for the second quarter, as concerned agencies were expected to accelerate major infrastructure development projects in May and June.

The government has allocated P29.3 billion for capital outlay in the second quarter.

Infrastructure spending in the Philippines accounts for only about 3 percent of the country's gross domestic product, below the 5 percent benchmark set by the World Bank for boosting economic growth.

Investors put in $22M in Subic

By Roland W. Domingo

INVESTORS ARE PUTTING IN AT LEAST $22 million to build more first-class accommodation in Subic as authorities push for the further development of the freeport as a tourist destination.

Armand C. Arreza, chief executive of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, said Legenda Hotel wanted in Isabela reconstructed in the freeport.

"The plan is to build a structure with 300 rooms, which would possibly be added with 200 more," Arreza said. "The $20-million project would provide comfort five-star accommodation in Subic."

He explained that the plan was being entertained even as the SBMA board decided not to endorse Legenda's current tending P720 million.

Arreza said a payment schedule had been set where the investor would shell out P130 million over three years.

Also, he added that Sun Star Hotel, which has a boutique hotel on Boracay Island, was looking at building a structure with 300 rooms near Subman Beach for $2 million.

"SBMA welcomes these projects because we want to increase the stock of five-star accommodation here," Arreza said. "Currently, the available rooms in Subic are first-class and standard ones."

Another possible project was Catalino Sicat's residential resort in Hidden Beach, although this would be "difficult."

Arreza said Catalino wanted to build the resort on a 25-hectare area under a 50-year lease.

In March, SBMA officials said the agency was offering discount rates or promotional fees of up to 80 percent in an effort to attract more airline operators and boost tourism in the area.

The officials said SBMA was looking into the possibility of SIA being able to service routes to "any point in Asia."

Current carriers using SBIA include Inter-Island Airlines which offers chartered flights to Manila and Taiwan; Mandarin Air with flights in and from Taiwan; Cebu Pacific with flights from Incheon in South Korea; Air Philippines with flights in and from Hong Kong.

3G phone prices seen going down

By Gaelen I. Lucas

PRICES OF THIRD-GENERATION (3G) NEXT-week cellular phones may drop to the much anticipated P2,000 mark when launched sometime next year, helping fuel a boom in the service.

This prediction was made yesterday by an official of Smart Communications Inc. as the company launched a service that would allow its subscribers to watch sports programs on their mobile phones.

"We could see the handset price of $100/unit, in one year," usage marketing and e-services group head Ian Huevo said in a briefing.

Once this threshold is breached, the industry will see subscriber additions of up to one million a month, similar to what was seen during the launch of the existing second-generation network in the late 1990s, he added.

Huevo said that nobody knows at present just how big the 3G service can be worth since it remains in its infancy locally as well as abroad.

"But we've made a bet on it," he said, adding that Smart is counting on consumers to make the 3G network their most popular tool for accessing services like entertainment and communication.

Bunyi's prediction of a rapid drop in 3G handset prices is, so far, the most aggressive made by a representative of a local network. Globe Telecom Inc. president and CEO Gerardo C. Ablaza Jr. earlier made the same prediction although he cited a more cautious note on the cost of the new technology's mass acceptance.

At present, the cheapest 3G phones sell for the equivalent of $225 per unit, while the most advanced models sell for as much as $500 each.

Yesterday, Smart, together with sister firm eTUDI and PCCIplus, signed an agreement with IMC Media for the latter to provide 3G sports content that can be viewed via Smart's 3G phones.

IMG Media is a division of IMG, the world's largest sports and entertainment company.

The 3G sports content will cover more about a range of sports, including tennis, golf and football, as well as local events like the ABNP Cup and the JVC Badminton Open.

Local sports are also entered with improvised content which will allow users to learn techniques from the professionals.

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Market research helps build brands

Benefits of knowing market well outweigh cost of conducting study

By Karen V. de Asis
Contributor

NOT MANY FIRMS APPRECIATE the value of applied market research in selling and building brands. Many believe that it is an expensive exercise, and merely tells them what they already know.

In many cases, the research outcome may not be satisfying, due largely to gaps in the preparation of the market research brief.

The quality of the research depends largely on how well the research briefing was conducted and how the mandates and agreements before the primal research progressed.

The old adage "garbage in, garbage out" largely applies in this case.

What makes a research brief?

At least seven critical elements must be present in any research brief.

These are the research background, research objectives, respondent profile or potential target market, methodology, sample size, timing and budget.

The details of the brief may vary depending on the discussion between the research agency and the client.

At the onset, the marketer must be clear on the use of a particular research methodology and the expected results.

Research background. Provides an overview of the company and/or brand and the scenario leading to the need to conduct research.

Research objectives. Define and list the reasons for conducting research. Likewise, define the learning parameters and what the marketer expects to know from the entire research process.

Respondent profile. Describes the potential target market and/or respondent group. This includes the demographic, socioeconomic and psychographic information, if available.

Research methodology. Describes the preferred methodology for achieving insights. The brief should not only define the preferred method, nonetheless, in a discussion between the marketer and agency, the methodology may be retained or changed.

Sample size. This refers to the number of people called respondents, who will be part of the research process. The actual number depends on the type of research that will be executed i.e. whether qualitative or quantitative.

Qualitative tests require less number of respondents while quantitative tests must have a minimum number of respondents statistically acceptable to represent the universe being studied.

Timetable. The timetable defines when the client expects to get the results of the study. The agency and the client agree to a timetable that works backwards from the Go/ Give presentation date.

Budget. The client provides the agency with his budget. This may change depending on the outcome of the discussion of the research method and process.

How does research build brands?

Applied consumer market research is one of the most effective ways of meeting a brand to a certain direction.

There are different forms of consumer market research. Some of the most effective and commonly used methods include the focus group discussion (FGD), usage, attitude, image survey (UAIS), product placement test, advertising pre-test, brand audit and the customer satisfaction survey.

Focus group discussion. The focus group discussion is a qualitative study that allows deep interaction with a group of people called respondents, who would be part of the potential target market. Each FGD can have anywhere from six to eight participants.

While not statistically acceptable and data tends to be further validated by quantitative research, the insights and results of the FGDs are often used to set the direction of the brand.

Depending on the respondent profile and details of the research study, FGDs may cost anywhere from P60,000 to P120,000 per group.

Usage, attitude, image survey. This type of quantitative survey makes use of a highly structured questionnaire that helps determine the level of consumption of a brand and its competitors.

Likewise, the outcome of the research also determines the consumers' attitude, likability, perception and associations around the brand and its competition. The results of the research help determine the brand's most favorable and strong associations that can be otherwise strand or very relaxed and may be sustained to prevent and failure communication materials.

The propitious scope of the UAI and sample has implications on the final cost of the study. It may range from a low of P250,000 to over a million pesos.

Product placement test. This type of research test can be done through an initial small sample and then developed into a full blown quantitative research. The objective is to gauge the target market's acceptance of a product or its derivative, determine how the product is actually used by consumers, appeal of the product as well as areas for improvement.

Depending on the sample, profile and objectives of the product placement test, costs can range from a low of P60,000 to P350,000.

Advertising pre-test. This type of quantitative research is conducted before the commercial airing of a brand campaign. Due to the high cost of advertising, it is often wise for brands using television as a major medium to have their advertising campaign tested before nationwide airing.

Reputable market research agencies have their own proprietary versions of the advertising pre-test. Nonetheless, the objectives for testing remains the same for all. These include determining the ability of the ad to rise above the media clutter or the advertising material's level of interest, ability to communicate the brand's value proposition, product/ brand/ window and brand personality, ability of the ad to effectively motivate the target market to buy the brand.

Most creative ads engage the viewer. Unfortunately, a good number stop at this stage and fail to move the buyer to buy the product.

The advertising pre-test is a very effective tool in determining whether a brand's advertising is simply engaging or is truly highly effective in persuading the target market to buy the brand. Prices vary case from a low of P100,000 to a high of P400,000 depending on the sample.

Brand audit. This is an efficient way of determining what products fly off the store shelves, and how fast. While gross sales are usually the source of many firms to measure the performance of the brand, consumer off-take nonetheless provides a more accurate description of the brand's performance in the market.

Depending on a company's intent to use the results, sales tracking can happen where retail outlets area to volume purchase orders. Nonetheless, these orders can be sitting in the warehouse or in-store shelves.

On the other hand, a retail audit provides an accurate picture of the market's acceptance of a brand as the data reveals consumer movement from the store shelves.

Information that can be derived from retail audits include which SKU (unique or size is invariably being bought heavily, how many units are being moved out per store, per geographic area, etc. in a certain period. Some of the category and its brands performing well.

Retail audit costs vary based on the accuracy of the data and the category. The cost range from P150,000 to as much as P450,000.

Customer satisfaction survey. This survey provides an effective way to measure the level of satisfaction the consumer has about the brand. Is the target market truly elated when using the brand, will he or she recommend the use of the brand, what did the consumer like or not like about the brand, etc.

Learning from this research tool can help the marketer institutionalize the consumer offer and process and improve on any deficiencies.

The costs of research can be substantial, indeed. But, this is small compared to the cost of a disastrous strategy or wrong brand direction.

One must also recognize that it is the client's expert use of research that will ultimately help build his brand.

(The author is a professor of Marketing and Brand Management at the De La Salle Professional Schools Graduate School of Business and is the president and chief executive officer of Marketing Knowledge Consulting Training and Consultancy. e-mail: at kbasis@skyinet.net or www.marketnotes.com.)

GOINGS-ON

DOT sets bigger business mission to Japan

THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM IS SENDING A BIGGER DELEGATION FOR its business mission to Japan this month, the second since last year.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace H. Durano said the Department of Tourism-Philippine Marketing Office Japan (PMO) would be composed of 30 delegates representing a wider field of interests to enhance the mission's chances of attracting more Japanese tourists and investments.

"They will have pre-arranged meetings with executives and owners of reputable Japanese firms in Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka for investments, marketing tie-ups, joint ventures, and sales and supply contracts. A dedicated one-day business-to-business exchange between Philippine suppliers and Japanese buyers is also scheduled in Osaka on May 22, Nagoya on May 24 and Tokyo on May 26," Durano said.

With Philippine Airlines as a major sponsor, the DOT-PMO business activities and cruise ships, local government units (provincial, city and municipal), resorts and spas, travel agencies and tour operators, hotels and restaurants, health and wellness establishments, wholesalers and retail shops, and banks and financial institutions.

"Compared to the trip last year's agreements, the 2nd PBM will also open and initiate new ones, especially on investments in tourism facilities that will increase our current 15,000 room capacity, which is just enough to accommodate our target foreign arrivals of three million this year," Durano added.

The 2nd PBM, according to Durano, must also truly ensure that this year's target of hitting 5 million foreign visitors will be attained. He said last year's PBM helped push the country's foreign arrivals for the full-year 2005 to 3.6 million, which is not bigger 1994's record 3.28 million, with Japan as a major source of tourists.

"This year's trend is more significant as it marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan since the ratification of the Peace Treaty and Reparations Agreement on July 23, 1956.

Since then, Japan has evolved to become the Philippines' second largest investor, trading partner and source of tourists, and largest donor of official development assistance.

Durano said the 2nd PBM would also reinforce the new self-established Premium Resort Islands/Philippines brand in Japan, support the new sub-campaign "Philippines: Wellness is on the Inside Out," point-to-point airports, and promote the country's destinations to the 17-million-Japanese outbound market.

Thomas Che Tuan Pibul, members of the local tourism industry will gain bilateral government assistance in finding Japanese buyers of travel packages, investors in new properties, and partners for joint ventures or asset acquisitions, and other business linkages.

Japan is projected to account for over a million, or more than 20 percent, of the country's four million target arrivals by 2010.

Learn candle- and soap-making

AROMATIC candles are ideal for souvenirs and gifts because of their soothing and relaxing effect. Learn how to make aromatic candles and earn some cash in the process.

In line with the government's objective to give livelihood to those who want to earn extra income, the Golden Treasure Skills Development Program with certified seminar-workshops on "Candle-Making" at the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Women's Training Center in Marikina City on May 23, Tuesday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Topics to be discussed are sourcing of materials and different coating techniques and how to create floating candles. Students will be given hands-on experience on how to make decorative aroma candles, layered candles, gel candles and others with a theme type paraffin wax, candle in glass container etc.

On May 27, Saturday, the Golden Treasure Skills Development Program will conduct a one-day seminar on soap-making to be held at the DTI-NCR Atrium Center, Makati City Avenue, Makati St., University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Topics to be discussed are sourcing of materials and coating. Students will learn how to make liquid dishwashing soap, liquid hand soap, liquid all purpose soap, low detergent soap, herbal bath soap (papaya, watermelon, cucumber, oatmeal etc.) powder soap, fabric softener, car shampoo, bonus: homemade shampoo. The kit and hand cleaner (mixture of petroleum jelly and sugar) will be given to participants. Certificates will be issued after the seminar. All materials will be provided. For questions, call (02) 426-38; (02) 920-30; 361-2048; 436-7625 and 913-6511.

'Will price-cut promos damage our brand equity?'

Dr. Jose Roberto & Andy Roberto

Q: We attended a seminar where one of the speakers told us that price-driven promotions can damage brand equity. If this is true, what are so many companies doing it?

Then, when we reduced the tension at the office and mentioned this warning, our general manager disagreed.

He said that many of the leading consumer companies, like P&G, Unilever and Colgate-Palmolive, that are still into price-based promos.

He asked: "Do you say the brand equity of Ariel, Volkspeed, Scotch, or Palmolive Shampoo suffering?"

So, let's see the real score on the effect of price-driven promos on brand equity?

As if we source "the real score" from the available published studies on this issue, we will find different answers.

Some studies showed that a quick fix promo-based promo adversely affected brand equity. But just as many studies showed no such adverse effect.

To answer your two questions, we'll source from both theory and practice.

Then, let's go to you to choose which logic seems more applicable in your particular case and circumstance.

Your first question: "Is it true that price driven promos damage brand equity?"

What are price driven, price-based promotions in the first place? And how does this differ from a product-based promo?

Pronto advocates tell us that a "price-off" and a coupon are price-based consumer promos.

On the other hand, a bonus pack and a product sample are product-based consumer promos. You see examples of these promos in the supermarkets every day.

Many practitioners would of course argue that a bonus pack or a product sample is effective. It functions like a price-off or a coupon. They are "indirect" price-based promos. It's trade promotion, a trade discount is a price-based trade promo while a free good (as in a "1-Kilo-1" deal, that is, a "10 cans bought, 1 cans free" deal) is a product-based trade promo.

Again, some would argue that a "1-Kilo-1 free good deal" is effectively an "indirectly" a 10 percent discount and therefore a price-based promo.

So as you can see, here's one reason why there's a continuing, raging unsettled debate about sales promotion.

There isn't even an agreement among practitioners about basic terms like what's a product-based versus a product-based promo.

If you trace the origin of the debate, you'll find that it's the ad agency people who were critical of the promo and its effect on brand equity.

The claim is that advertising builds brand values.

However, because promos are quick ways to induce brand switching, repeat purchase, or getting consumers to buy more or buy more, they often focus on the expense of brand image.

But what do studies show? Here are some of those studies' more insightful and helpful results.

Your category determines the risk

First, you have to consider the product category when your brand belongs.

If your brand is a consumer durable (say, a household appliance or a car), there's not much risk of its brand equity getting hurt by, for example, a sale price promo.

At the end of almost every year, when the next year's model is announced, leading car brands go on a sale price promo.

And that's been going on for years. But no one would say that Honda's and Toyota's brand equity remain intact.

Next, consider the price segment your brand is in.

If it's in a premium segment and you get trapped and yield to the temptation to promote based on price, then something could happen.

One could think: "How can this brand of mine go down close to the price of an economy brand without sacrificing quality? It must now be lower in quality on some of the attributes. That's not my premium brand anymore."

In such a case, the price promotion erodes the premium brand's equity and image.

Then there are those who think that high-quality brands rarely go for promotional sales, if a premium brand does go on a promotion, then its quality must have been compromised.

Third, you need to also consider your brand's competitive set as and extend brand equity.

If your brand is a strong market leader with just as strong brand equity it's going to be less vulnerable to threats to its equity value.

Take Clairol, for example.

This brand is a strong leader brand in the premium hair coloring segment (but not the total dyestuffs market).

It also has an established dramatic brand equity and value. When it went for price promotions, these did little or no damage to its brand equity.

The many recent cases have involved Jollibee and McDonald's.

Both are leading brands have been and are into one promo after another. There's no solid evidence that these promos hurt these brands' equity values.

We're out of space! We'll answer your second question on why companies still do price promos that are (may) likely to do damage to their brand equity next week.

Keep your questions coming. Send them to us at MarketingRx@skyinet.net or text us at 0919-234-3432. *(Jo Ahmad)*

Contributing editors
Jeani Esperanza
and Agnes Abanto-Gashwani

Cubicle couture

wi-fi fashion

style file

How can't become Top Boy on this dog-eat-dog world by being the Preppy Boy, the Lazy-Sick Tee or the Schizoid Businessman. Be the Fashionista Poodle instead

wall-connected

period pusher

Mabuhay!

Jenni Epperson

HAVE YOU BEEN TO A DOG competition? Breed after breed, dog after dog just running 'round and 'round for others to look cool, criticize and weed out.

Oh! Did I just describe your office?

It's hard to stand out from the pinstriped chaos, so it's essential to bring a little something to the workplace that will make you shine like the top executive that you are. It's not just about your color-coordinated pie graphs and bar charts. It's also about bringing the awareness to the boardroom.

No matter how many hours of overtime you've pulled, no one's **how many PowerPoint presentations you've crunched** is **that cute little laptop of yours or how many times you've had an afternoon delight with your boss** (Ooh, you little devil!), **there is no such solid assurance that the** big game upstairs are going to give you that **corner office with the espresso machine.**

So what will make you, fashionista Poodle, **different from all the other doggies in the dog** pound? A sense of narcissism, a touch of fun and a whole lot of brains. And James Boyer big-corporate material.

James Boyer (1917-6228-1021 a Young Designers Guild (YDG) grumpie, adopts up his and fabulous bespoke dress duties for the kind of pretty poodle that you are.

"I realize people's wit and character slip to a close are for women who are sensitive and have a sense of humor," he says. "I get inspired by them—pretty much people who are **like my friends in advertising."**

It is no surprise that James, who **has worked many a dog day's af**ternoon as an associate creative director **for an advertising firm**, knows that beauty does not escape to **inevitable and the only salvation is** the office battle... and your ex**emely order.**

By revolutionizing the dress shirt, James' pieces will bring much-needed (and should-be-required) wit and humor to what is often a sea of boxy peplums and double-breasted blazers. He's based his fashion with corporate sensibility by mixing traditional essence tailoring with a dash of bow-flow movement.

So, my preppy little poodles, add a little bite to your outfits by joining these **contemporary dress shirts with classics like** pinstriped pants and pencil skirts, and accessorize them with simple pearls or diamonds.

Looking this chic, you'll definitely be ready when they start hauling out the blue ribbons called promotion.

E-mail the author jbaltazar@inquirer.com.ph

From his closet to your wardrobe

THEY SAY THAT IT'S A MAN'S world, especially in the workplace. While this may be true, mindsets have been changing fortunately in the past decades. Proof of this is the fact that there are more women leaders nowadays. Gloria Arroyo and Cory Aquino are just a couple of examples of the female of the species leading a predominantly patriarchal society.

MEN'S WHITE SHIRT: Click on oversize shirt with a wide belt to make it your own.

Apples Aberin-Sachwani

The key to this sartorial takeover is simple. While wearing your man's article of clothing, always allow your femininity to shine through

Into the workforce is full of hardworking wives and mothers who've managed the shift from bedroom to boardroom. Superwomen the world over now manage to combine both domestic and professional lives, and they do so **with flying colors.**

That said, allow me to encourage all working **women out there not to settle for a mere** domination of world affairs. Go ahead and **take over your man's closet as well.** Pilfer, dressing for work, raid your home hall's chiffon **boxer for men's basics that you can easily** incorporate into your wardrobe.

Your man's basic white shirt is perfect for this occasion. Match it with leggings, dress pants or a sexy ultra-tattered pencil skirt. And don't forget to emphasize your womanly curves by using a wide belt.

Accessories also play a major role in this bid for "closet control," so while you're at it, swipe his sunglasses, too. His oversized watch will look especially stylish with your feminine garb and dainty wrists. Mix it up with bangles, bracelets and charms for a more fashionable feel.

Another item you can easily make your own is his necktie. Instead of using a belt or sash, grab his tie and use it to cinch your waist. Tie bright-colored ties or neckerchiefs the perfect contrast to your neutral work wardrobe. For added flash, accessorize with a sparkly brooch.

The key to this sartorial takeover is quite simple. While wearing your man's articles of clothing, always allow your femininity to shine through. So don those spiky stilettos **and shimmer red lips and don't let anyone for**get that you're all women, even though they say it's a man's world.

E-mail the author at ajbachsw@inquirer.com.ph

MEN'S WATCH: Wear chunky clothes, blazers and bangles with your hubby's watch.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

COMICRelief

FRIDAY, MAY 19, 2006

POSTBOT

BY BILL AMEND

A LITPIX

BY JESS ABRERA

MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY

BY PAUL JUNIOR

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT

HUTTS

BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

ATOMIC AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PANALIGAN

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

THIS WEEK'S THEME: Summary and coverage of your star beliefs. This week anything could be the subject matter of your astrologer's column. (The stars of others maybe you.) Ultimately, you will not ignore your individual life. You're not here alone regarding the world in your immediate life. A big change (perhaps as significant as in 1997) will take place this week.

Birthdays of: Lorraine Bracco (64), playwright/actress; Malcolm X, activist; Ivan Reitman, producer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Group dynamics are changing. Be open to new ideas. You will take about your people, and possibly, current issues. Your mind is very attractive. There is not the time to stay at home and relax.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Today there is a chance that you will receive a wish-way for the next two months. This makes your mind more open, especially younger people. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Communications with others are important. Especially younger people. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You can expect to receive some unexpected gifts and communication. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Financial matters are important. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): In the next few weeks, you will receive some good news. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You don't have to be afraid to be yourself in other words. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Instruments, you have the patience to do the work and to be in bills, taxes, debt and end-caps stuff. Accountants are made for this time to face reality.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Today you may receive unexpected news. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You'll have many to do matter, do. Good work in the new year. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Confirmation of your relationship with your friends, social connections and relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Usually decisions are important to the next few weeks. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships. Be open to new ideas. You have a strong desire to continue social relationships.

DAILY CROSSWORD

HUGOT-HUGOT

BY JOHNIE TEJOO

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON

KIKO MACHINE

BY MANG ABRERA

LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHONG-D

TULDOK

BY RAFLAND "BEHUH HILAMBALING"

Men at work

FASHIONISTA. Tiffany plaid tuxedo vest in yellow-blue and tuxedo trousers

TROUBLESHOOTERS. On Albert: Spray shoulder-to-waist coat and white high-collar tuxedo shirt and light gray pin-striped pants. On Peter: Blue-and-gray check-and-stripe seersucker shirt, garrison waist and gray pin-striped pants

By Ana Y. Vergara

You can always vary the look of a well-made suit by wearing and combining it with a different shirt, tie, belt, shoes and even socks

UNLIKE WOMEN, MOST men don't make an effort to regularly update their wardrobes. Since guys aren't as vulnerable as women to shelving rounds in fashion, many shop for clothes (prodded to no small way by their partners) or visit their tailors only when the need arises. Well and good.

But such a parsimonious approach to fashion shouldn't be an excuse for you to neglect your closets. Only by keeping tabs of what you have can you make wise shopping decisions in the future, says fashion designer Joey Salamanca.

"It's rare to see a guy go through his clothes regularly," he says. "They should. It's the only way to find out what you have and what you don't have, what you don't use and what you should use, what you should keep and what you should discard."

Such reluctance not will also come in handy if and when you decide to update or limit up your current wardrobe. Even if you're not a slave to trends, it's important to know by heart the contents of your cabinet before buy, eg, something major, like a bespoke suit or designer jacket.

Will the new work with your current pieces—from shoes to belts, shirts to ties? If not, are you willing to shell out extra cash for new stuff aimed at complementing this one? Does the jacket look a lot like an old one you still use? Would it be better to postpone the purchase or go for a different style, color and make?

"Such knowledge will not only save you money," says Salamanca. "It will also leave you with an uncluttered wardrobe and save you from going on frequent trips to the mall or your tailor."

Apart from taking a mental note of your current ist possessions, it's important that you do a cursory self-examination of each item in your presentability lifestyle and career (needing being enough, that might lead you to question your faith or sexuality).

"I always ask clients, especially first-timers, about their careers and lifestyles," says Salamanca. "I also ask them whether or not they're familiar with my work, as I need to know if their sense of style is more suited to another designer."

Other primary considerations, of course, are budget and the occasion for which you intend to wear the ensemble. Being faithful has its rewards, but it will certainly cost you more. Unlike safe and classic cuts, edgy details are more likely to make your key pieces look identifiable and dated sometime even before the next season rolls in.

ATTIRE. Black cardigan and two-button jacket with pinstripes on white shirt and white-and-brown wingtip shoes

TOOLS OF THE TRADE. On Albert: Olive jacket with front-strap closure detail, yellow pin-striped shirt and pale blue jeans. On Peter: Beige cardigan and plaid jacket and jeans with V-neck shirt and olive-suede tie

Safe choices

If you opt for classic pieces, however, you need not repeat yourself and sacrifice style. You can always vary the look of a well-made suit by wearing and combining it with a different shirt, tie, belt, shoes and even socks.

"Apart from paying attention to your physique," says Salamanca, "you should also be particular about the suit's fit, proportion, construction and materials. Such attributes can make or break a look."

A white jacket—an unusual choice to wear to the office, yes, despite such—makes all those material, fit and tailoring requirements even more important. Its material should be heavy enough to support the jacket with the right "fall." Off-white or linen is a safer choice for the office compared to pure white.

"When in doubt, go for denim pieces," he says. "You should also dress for comfort and the prevailing weather."

Being classic doesn't necessarily mean boring. Certainly not in the hands of a designer like Salamanca, who can transform even the most ordinary items into a snappy dresser sometimes without him ever knowing it.

Thanks to his feel for proportion and adept tailoring skills, Salamanca is able to infuse subtle details on the suit as well as various established ways of cutting and manipulating fabrics. The results are the garments' fresh and stylish panels to inverted seams, from slanted front pockets to unpressed sleeves.

"Most of my staple clients hardly notice such unusual features," says Salamanca with a wink. "It's usually their sisters and girlfriends who notice them. They come to me and whisper in hushed tones how they love this or that detail."

Their men, of course, look all the better because of such subtle details.

E-mail the author at anvergara@inquirer.com.ph

Case in point

By Glenda V. Maral

WHITE LADY. Dolce-logo handbag with grosgrain bow by Giannini at Rustan's Department Store; printed silk scarf by Louis Vuitton

CASE THE JOINT. Polka-dot laptop bag with leather trim by Nicole Iguidez; yellow leather tote from Joy Kate Spoils

Big on function, bigger on style—power totes for the stylish working woman

DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER. Canvas-logo bag with leather strap by Baby

BUCKLE UP. Camel leather tote by Salvatore Ferragamo; butterfly-logo chain by Salvatore Ferragamo

SIZE MATTERS, SEASON trend reports say. They mean women's purses, of course—large, capacious satchels that can fit a PowerBook, a Thermos of caffeine and, well, maybe a few loose change, a bottle of Evian and a small child.

Ask any busy multitasking woman and she'll tell you this is possibly the most practical trend that has come in lots of late. Finally, something that can fit her water-daily bottle life need.

Big, however, isn't the only consideration when picking a bag that goes in work with you and works for you.

Take into account your work environment—is it creative or thoroughly staid and professional? A metallic, shoulder bag is what for someone who works out in an advertising firm may be deemed too casual for a bank executive, except for something more structured.

"Structured" doesn't, however, mean boring. They now come in a variety of shapes that mimic more casual styles. Totes, styles in boxier totes, trunk (tiered blocks and boxes) come in woven or textured materials, with golden metal hardware and other interesting details—check out the handles, shoulder straps or flaps. An unexpected color, of course, is the perfect foil to a dark suit.

Remember that professional doesn't have to mean drab. A bright, colored scarf tied around the handle or some nice little charms dangling on the side are guaranteed to add punch to the most sober of black bags.

Logos are also something to watch out for again, the streaming bird has no place in a formal work atmosphere. What if it's a loose fitting, print with the logo worked in, the Monogram Canvas, maybe, but only the Denim for the weekend or a night in the town. Besides, you don't want your bosses to think they're paying you too much by going on(site) flaunting big name logos in the office. (Uh-oh.)

Your choices boil to to finding one that's big on function. But never, ever, scrimp on style. Take, for instance, your laptop bag. If it's the generic black kind with a thick shoulder strap, emblazoned on the front with a logo other than your company's or your laptop's (read: a name brand you're somehow/not), junk it now! Leave those to the boys.

The market is increasingly recognizing the demand for totes that suit fit women's lifestyle—and vanity be as the same time. If you look hard enough, you will find bi-fashion and laptop bags in a variety of styles, fabrics and materials, and styles that have built-in padded sleeves for a laptop, compartments for a cellphone, a BlackBerry battery charger, an iPod, a binder of documents, magazines and your makeup.

Worst of all, they're so pretty they don't look like laptop bags at all (or what you used to think they are, at least).

It's a real challenge, this quest for the perfect laptop case that suits the also working woman that you are. If you do find one, chances are the price tag can make quite a dent on your pocketbook. Of course, considering what you paid for that Mac Book Pro, it's only wise to invest in a nice case to lug it around in.

We scoured the Net for some styles you can choose from. (www.fashionmall.com, nursecopy.tripod.com, www.girlsinhand.com, www.holabags.com, www.shoplimeyork.com). Oh, did we mention some hand bag makers offer custom services? (Wink, wink.)

Now get down on it and we'll get off your case!

Email the author at amaral@inquirer.com.ph

Breeze through the work place in dauntless strides. Hotwind's stylish steppers will kick you up a notch in the corporate ladder

Shoe them

The View from the Top: Golden

As you go up the ladder of success, tastes change and lifestyles are enhanced. Riding up with you on the elevator to the top is **BDO Gold MasterCard**. **BDO Gold** has just upped its ethos with their **Gold Lifestyles Promo**. Now, it brings you the finer things in life when you apply for, activate and use a **BDO Gold MasterCard**.

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LIFESTYLE
Contributing Editor Ria Francisco-Prieto
Editor Cheib Bacal-Formoso

BEAUTY

Look good, be good

We spend more time at work than at home or out partying, so proper grooming does go a long way

Ria Francisco-Prieto

I'M IN AN INTERNET CAFÉ AT 7 A.M., writing the article I have to e-mail in a few hours so I could beat my deadline.

Earlier, I literally rolled out of bed, looked for sweats and didn't have much luck. I ended up mismatching, but figured no one knows me here anyway so it should be okay.

At the moment, I am across the hide-hotel my husband and I are staying in and I am frowning. I am a bit spaced out and just checking out some people coming in to get their morning caffeine fix.

If there is one thing that actually kept how important—or successful a person is in his or her line of work, it would be how presentable he or she is.

So as I am trying to concentrate on the story I'm writing and checking out people at the same time, I realize how important good grooming is in the work place. Or, actually, in any place, since I'm noticing that people entering just want to glance at me. Now I know how much of a homeless person I look.

I believe if you are happy in your job, you are compelled to dress better. Work can be the best place for you when you enjoy what you are doing and love the people you work with. At the very least, the more dressed and well groomed you are, the more people will take you seriously and the more visible you become for that promotion.

We spend more time at work than at home or out partying, so good grooming does go a long way. It is easy and takes less than 10 minutes.

To your hair if you don't have time to blow-dry it. If you've not had enough sleep, use a concealer. Brush on some blush and swipe on your favorite shade of lippie.

You don't always have to put eye shadow. Sometimes curling your lashes and adding mascara are enough. Make sure your nails are clean and then spray on a lovely scent. Celebrate yourself and make sure you look good. You want to be presentable, and people are drawn to good-looking people, anyway—which is actually anybody and everybody who is well-kept.

That can surely be you. I should know. I honestly wish I took a few more extra minutes to look for my matching jump suit, tie my hair and put on some blush and lipstick. As it is, even if I'm in a café where no one knows me, I feel unworthy of walking this streets. Though I feel I should, too, since at the moment I am reporting from the other end of the spectrum, and I'm not enjoying it.

SHU Uemura's Amber and Nature's Collection's Liquid Shimmer Eyeliner in bronze

SHU Uemura's Amber and Nature's makeup palette

SHU Uemura's Amber and Nature Collection's Lolishine Rouge No2

Enhanced skin-brightening products

MOST ASIAN WOMEN want fair skin and their reason may be frowned upon as racism, but they are right: fair skin will keep them looking young long-term.

Whitening or brightening products actually reverses skin damage and boosts skin immunities, making skin healthy and strong. When you think about it, sun skin afterward in best condition when we were babies. It was even tested all over, the lighter it was, the higher the moisture in your skin; stronger then, as our ancestors healed fast.

Did you notice that when we were children, when we went to the beach, our tan faded really fast compared with the latter years? That was because of the skin's ability to heal itself due to a very efficient immune system.

The whitening products sold over the counter aim to get back your even-toned baby skin, making it perhaps a little lighter. Their main purpose is to eliminate damage and discoloration like freckles, age spots and pimple clash or red marks to leave your skin clear and even.

For huge discolorations caused by

MAKEOVER 911

Kissy Sadier

menopause or pregnancy, I would suggest strong products under a doctor's supervision such as the Obagi Nu Derm program. It really does work the bronze and pickle-brown results.

But the progress easy-skid dissevers results when you are lax about it, hence the doctor's supervision. It's the only one I know that actually erases all the stubborn freckles.

Very noticeable results

Brightening brands have intensified their formulas so that very noticeable results are seen in a week or less. The future includes use of creams/pimple marks, and the longer to disappear are age spots.

The basic step-it, of course, cleanser, toner, masque/serum (the most crucial product) and day cream with SPF and whitening ingredients. The following brands take into account the skin type; they have a specialized toner and every cleanser.

Lancôme Blanc Expert Renovateur, Estée Lauder Cyberwhite, Shu Uemura White Recovery Ex (made even more potent), and Clinique Dermawhite, which has the most extensive and, shall I say, complicated steps that will thrill the whitening fanatic!

I still use my Pure Focus cleanser and toner to mop up my oily face because the Lancôme Toning Lotion I chose are dots for me.

Lancôme, Estée said they have made their essences more potent. I see results in overall skin lightening just a day after using them.

People even remark that my skin has become very white. The product has also been up pigmentation on my menopausal sun subjects aged 50 and above!

Clinique has added many enhancements in its line. I like the CL4 anti-aging clarity formula and the gel mask with activator spray that leaves skin feeling like satin and looking like porcelain.

The whitening boosters for evening use, there are now treatments that are applied straight for a period to exfoliate and boost the brightening action to achieve glowing, even skin that is translucent-love.

For damaged skin

Those with sun-damaged and weathered skin still are the steady bases. My favorites: 1) Clarins White Plus skin renewer and whitening concentrate. It is applied every night after cleansing and toning for three weeks straight, to be used alone and with no other treatment except eye cream. It is intended to prep up the skin for the changes of season every three months. In the Philippines, every six months should be sufficient to boost the skin as we do not have radical changes in climate. I tested this on my neck; I don't say my neck is even slightly lighter in shade.

2) Caudalie Fleiber white C Ultra Concentrated whitening treatment for evenings is responsible for my lighter colored nape as well. I notice that I neglect my decolletes, arms, nape when it comes to sun protection. Using this resulted in my nape not only getting lighter but having a better texture than the skin on my face. For the daytime, I put many coats of SPF 30+ + sunblock that is sweat- and water-resistant. It soothes my skin immediately and I notice a firming and a reduction in inflammation.

I have more products in the brightening arena as the list expect this to be the busiest. The test are currently being run. They come in different price ranges to fit everyone's budget. Stay tuned!

THE BODY SHOP.

10TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

BUY 1 ITEM GET THE 2ND ITEM* AT P10!

* ITEM OF LOWER OR EQUAL VALUE SELECTED ITEMS ONLY

Spa opens branch in Ortiga

BODY Tune has a number of body treatments like Dead Sea salt scrub, seaweed body scrub, honey body polish, body snow mud wrap, seaweed rose mud wrap and oatmeal nourishing bath.

REFRESH your mind and body with different herbs and essential oils.

The New 2006 Chevrolet TrailBlazer EXT, equipped with OnStar® that collects engi

Kris, Boy praise the Xändo™ weight loss science

When the local queen and king of talk trio Kris Aquino and Boy Abunda first heard of the breakthrough science of Xando weight loss tablets, they were more than eager to try it.

EUROPEAN STUDY REVEALS MORE WEIGHT LOSS BY BLOCKING EXCESS CARBO

INT'L LAB STUDIES PROVE XANDO TO BE SAFE

CHEVROLET TRAILBLAZER EXT
Perfectly Stable Ride.

Exciting beauty issue

BECAUSE WOMEN DESERVE ONLY THE best, Marie Claire magazine recently presented the winners of the Prix D'Excellence de la Beauté 2006, a prestigious award given to the most best cosmetic products in the world.

In its May issue, Marie Claire reviews more makeup styles in the world. It also features the top makeup looks, ranging from nude-as-all to sexy and smoldering, as 44 women (can relate the opposite sex really thinks of your makeup. Beauty editors all over the world also reveal their foolproof beauty secrets in this month's "Global Beauty." And finally, Marie Claire shows readers how to take the most exciting makeup styles from this season's runways and our faces to real life. Grab your copy of Marie Claire's May issue featuring Jennifer Garner on the cover, now available in magazine stands and bookstores at P120 per copy.

LIFESTYLE

No need to be alarmed about 'whitening'

To be safe, keep in mind that you must use only reputable brands. Don't experiment with cheap products

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

LAST WEEK'S NEWS about the bad effects of whitening cream on some users in Iloilo shouldn't really disturb you if you have been sticking to reputable brands.

I heartily know someone who doesn't use or hasn't tried using whitening products. Even a few users I know are or have tried a whitening product, still some are at least cautiously using it.

To be safe, keep in mind that you must use only reputable brands. Don't experiment with cheap products that flood the market; chances are they're bleaching agents which are, you must know, harmful to your skin.

Most of the reliable brands have vitamin or natural extracts such as licorice. Others have hydroquinone and synthetic that fight skin discoloration and melanin production; they're all right as a small dosage. (The breakdown of ingredients and their effects is in Sioson's June issue.) Even if you use your whitening cream/lotion/soap/block cautiously, take time to read the ingredients.

As we've said often, whitening products aren't supposed to bleach you; they're supposed to even out the color of your skin, revitalize the cells and then give you that healthy glow.

Most important, keep in mind that you can't go under the sun for too long and not have blotches or sun spots, especially when you're using whitening products.

ANGEL Cosmo of Century Tuna's ad agency, Prinpus, Cosmo and Villa-ruel Communications, with beauti-full couple Richard Dimmick and Lucy Torres-Gomez at left, happy moments, Century Tuna's handout SVP/CCDO Nicole Po and head-turner Tricia Pastilio

TOP model Raya Manongsol

HIP couple Cinderella's Michelle Santos and Century Tuna executive Lee Po

Hot fest of beaches and bodies

SUPERMODEL Beach Fest hunks

GORGEOUS Female finalists

CENTURY Tuna's former poster boy Will Devaughn with Superbods winners Michelle Padua and Jon Mullally

WINNERS Jon Mullally (second from right) and Michelle Padua (second from right) with Ayesh Evangelista, Ginger Borja and Gigi Anghan, all from Century Tuna

TRICIA Pastilio with actresses Isa Lopez, Maitet and Queenie Cervantes

MAJOR guest looking Jim Fuentebella, CJ Jacinto, senior division manager, Ayala Land; Ronald Rhoads of Fishbol & Hoop; Leyte Divemkar, Sche's Ruby Gaw; and fashion designer Randy Ortiz

WINE LOVERS, Zafe Tan, Anne Marie Sagali, Vince Tan, EVP Ayala Land, and businessman Lei Sagali

ANIONS' Westmont and banker Marie at Mosaic Cafe

PLACELETS Nestlé chair of BCDA, and handsome Fortunato Zobel de Ayala of Ayala Land

WINS Alexander and Jon Ayala, vice president and president, respectively, of Ayala Land, with Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala

AVALA Mall's team: Myrna Cruz-Fernandez, senior division manager; AC Group's manager; Ramona Tuvera-lan, VP, good-looking Francois Lapie of Christian Dior; Catherine Ada, manager; Louis Vuitton Quarry and worldwide Nina de Vera, general manager of Louis Pottier Phils.

Expansion

There are malls. Then there are the Ayala Malls. As sustainable pioneers in the field, the Ayala Malls have time and again proved to be a cut above the rest, enhancing the shopping and entertainment experience through their superior service, customer-centric ways and revolutionary approaches.

The Ayala Malls include, of course, famed destinations Glorietta, Greenbelt, Ayalaland Terraces, Ayala Center Cebu and Market! Market! (Bonifacio Global City).

A new name will see soon the bustling urban landscape of Quezon City (Eastwood to open in 2007. Trinoma will be a four-level super regional shopping center that will have the best retail, dining and entertainment shops for the whole family. It will have a direct connection to the North Avenue station of the MRT. It will also have an amazing multi-floor terraced landscape for al fresco dining.

Ayala Land has ventured even beyond the country's borders. Its first overseas project is the Ayala Malls Serin, a mixed-use development in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia. Nusa Dua is a premier tourist destination in Bali, and Ayala Malls Serin will be the first shopping center in the area.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arjucho

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare camera

MT PAL Pepper Tsutsumina with Patrick Tan, vice president for Sales and PR with Odi Fuentes

SOCKY Pinargos

Filipino and International. It will also house specialty shops.

The signature plaza were recently announced by Ayala Land chair Fernando Zobel de Ayala and Ayala Corp. president Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala.

Hey, you can always be sure, palengges, that there is always tons of fun and excitement going on at Ayala Malls! But where else, o'no'o pa.

Wet and wild in Bolo

Pinoy's Open, in cooperation with Live Bait, brings to Bolo "Mr. Summer with Kimmy Bayer," which combines street partying, featuring Da La Cuchita, Breakbeatnic, and a very all-male fashion show, tonight at 8 at Intramuros Place, Bonn, Bolo.

Check it out, all you palengges from Bolo and Samboi. For tickets and reservations, call Live Bolo at 3000320, or Pinoy's Open at 3237590, or Robinsons Place Iloilo. It will really be a wet and wild bash, palengges.

MIRIAM Kanghak, EVP of Ayala Land; Chris Gotianun, NTCC director; and Regie Lacson, senior VP Ayala Land

Time for an Angel

By Bernadette Joy Lopez
Photos by Rodel Rodriguez

YOUNG STAR ANGEL LOCSIN went out of her way just to see her Timex billboard on one of the major thoroughfares in the city.

"I even paid the toll fee just to see the billboard," she shares. "I've been waiting for the ads to come out for the longest time."

It's easy to understand Locsin's excitement over her role in the newest Timex endorser alongside award-winning actor and the brand's perennial favorite Piolo Pascual.

The sleek, futuristic, edgy and sexy Timex "What's Next" campaign proves worthy of a debate, with shades of steel and blue tempering the fiery reds and steamy gazes, making one wonder how the images manage to be hot and cool at the same time.

The ads, shot by celebrity photographer Xander Angeles, have viewers in mad fervor—the lines and think "what's next?"

"It's like shooting a mini-movie," Angeles says. "There's a story behind each photo." His aide Cheryl handled the campaign's set and costume production for the three-day shoot.

Practical

Only Timex has successfully staged what's dubbed as a "casting coup," the Herculean task of pairing together two of the biggest stars from rival networks into one major advertising campaign. It's also only in the Philippines that Timex uses celebrity endorsers.

Both endorsers staunchly believe in the importance of owning a watch, not only for "porma" (as Locsin puts it), but also for more practical purposes.

"Given my lifestyle it's really important to be fully aware of the time, and often I'm consumed about what day it is," says Locsin, referring to her hectic schedule that often leaves her confused about dates. Her favorite Timex watch is the simple yet elegant Prospect and Colonist, which accurately keeps track of the date.

Locsin isn't the only celebrity who wears a watch for practical reasons. "When you're always on the go," Pascual says, "whenever you check your time you can actually organize your schedule, your day pretty well."

To Pascual, a watch is a status symbol. "[A watch] reflects what kind of a person you are, your social status and at the same time your character," he says. "It speaks a lot about you."

He first saw a Timex watch when he was barely 9 years old, he shares. His mother gifted him with a Timex, and the first thing that came to his mind was that it's "pang-mayaman."

Comfort

Since watches reveal far more than just the time, the endorsers offer a number of tips for those keen, but clueless, on buying a watch.

"Go for comfort. Go for what can reflect your personality," Pascual says. "If you have the money, of course you can choose different watches for different occasions, but if you're practical you'd want to choose something you can wear with anything."

The favorite watch, the top-of-the-line Automatic, can be worn with formal slacks or with jeans. "I like wearing it because anything matches it," he says. "And it's expensive!"

Locsin, who prefers big square watches, is on the same wavelength as her new leading man.

"When you're just starting your watch collection, buy something that goes with anything," she says. "A watch with a white strap fits in well with any casual outfit."

"For formal occasions, buy a watch with a thin silver strap," she adds. To Locsin, these two watches are the classic pieces for those on a budget.

"Those who intend to collect watches will delight in the many styles and designs Timex offers, to the women endorser-fiancé opens it. "Timex has the right model, the right design for every occasion."

Locsin has about 20-30 Timex watches. What about her other watches? "I don't use them anymore," she answers.

Pascual, meanwhile, says he has retired his non-Timex watches by swapping them to their boxes. "All the watches in my drawer are all Timex. I don't go out on occasions without wearing a Timex," he reveals.

Pascual, on his fourth stint for Timex, brushes off the idea that Timex cemented its market leadership in the Philippines because of his endorsement.

"Anyone can wear it—anyone wears it...anyway," he says, in reference to Timex topping the surveys as the top watch brand in the country for the past few years. "I think the most important thing is that anyone can afford it—any class, any person."

THE TWO biggest stars of the two biggest networks raise up for one explosive Timex "What's Next?" campaign.

ANGEL Locsin and Piolo Pascual share tips on buying and caring for timepieces.

Angel Locsin is the newest Timex endorser alongside award-winning actor and the brand's perennial favorite Piolo Pascual

No need to be alarmed about 'whitening'

From page E1

I myself have banned it the hard way. You can't have too much sun and whitening product. In short, you can't have your cake and eat it too.

This explains why many women, even the very young ones, have beauty spots no matter how smooth their skin. This is because they're not careful enough to avoid the overexposure.

Revisiting Deedee

It was a happy-and looking visiting journalist and former President Gary Aquino spokesperson Deedee Siytangco in her wonderful home in Tagaytay. Happy because I remembered the fun laidback atmosphere of old times. And sad because Deedee's husband and soul-mate, Sonny, is no longer around.

Sunny died of pancreatic cancer last November. Deedee is nonetheless now getting over it. That much we felt when we visited Deedee recently here. Sonny remains so much a part of their Tagaytay house, as he is of Deedee's and their children's lives.

The house is on a ridge with a breathtaking view of Taal Lake, the city and the picturesque Volcano Island. Deedee can sit on the bed of the master's bedroom and go over countless photos of Sonny with the kids—particularly of Sonny with the kids.

BELLA Vista

There's a photo of an exuberant Sonny with the youngest Al in young manhood lying flat on his stomach, on Sonny's lap, with Sonny's hand raised as if to punish him.

It's a "bonding ritual," Deedee told us. Sonny would playfully do that to Pat Idol every birthday in manner how big Gloriella's and grown-up Ina now had become.

A few steps beyond the room is the balcony looking down on the sleeping gardens and beyond it, the Tagaytay panorama. On the rail here, Deedee recalled, Sonny and she would hang their towels to dry every morning. Shortly after Sonny's death, Deedee began to hang hers, only to find it later, not hanging on the balcony rail. To this day Deedee believes that was Sonny's way of greeting her from beyond.

DEEDEE Siytangco with son David, who runs Bella Vista.

Shortly before he died, Sonny and Deedee agreed that once the house and garden have aught taken, they would open their weekend home to private functions. They called their house "Bella Vista."

Today Deedee is fulfilling that agreement. The Siytangcos have opened their weekend home to select private functions and private events friends led by Glenda Barretto.

Deedee has also engaged the catering services of old family friends and "soul" caterers, Andrew and Connie Pacsoasio, president of Town's Delight in Cavite.

Andrew specializes in very interesting Cavite dishes such as Cavite adobo of pork belly and quail eggs, and Litsón ni Agoncillo dinners. The range covers the popular local dishes, from chicken galantina to lengua. There are menus to choose from for debuts and small weddings. (For details, call Sandee Manggas, tel. (02)8-9503840.)

Deedee and her children are getting their routine back, after crises in the family. But Deedee draws some happiness from AJ's insight about the richness of his parents' 19-year marriage.

"Look at it as a long-running TV series Chato's Kitchen' sometimes," he told his mom, "but you had the best, very rich moments."

It's a bit of good news that our friend Rihel Tinsford is done with her surgery and is out of the hospital. Hopefully, she will be back in the lifestyle circle soon.

An interesting bit of news is that Lia Bermudez, Metro Society editor and corporate consultant, is not only into medication, but is also into reading.

CrownAsia elegantly signs a new name across the blue skies of Sta. Rosa

CrownAsia Signature Homes are stand outs, wherever the new silk flags fly to herald a new project.

Hundreds of genius hours are spent before CrownAsia proclaims a new site as a "signature project." Such is the case with Valenza, Sta. Rosa.

Significant enough locations. CrownAsia homeowners are self-made success stories. They need to live, work and play near business and productivity centers. Sta. Rosa is exactly this. Major world names in industry are positioned for their regional production, spawning a new town of technical and managerial stars.

Outstanding site development themes. CrownAsia signature homes lean heavily on Italian chic to distinguish each project look from all others around the area.

Value-for-money technical excellence. The consultants, architects and engineers of CrownAsia labor to put more value and save costs in each aspect of development. Space-saving features, practical technical specs allow CrownAsia to pass back savings onto making signature projects real pace competitive.

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